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ArchitectureBoston

Spring 2001

Shelter

Without apparent irony, the publishing industry has dubbed the legions of home decorating and design periodicals "shelter magazines." Breathlessly advising on pressing matters such as the relative merits of celadon and sage color schemes, these publications rarely address — or even acknowledge — the crises that are most obvious in the housing industry: affordability, sprawl, public housing. Basic shelter is still an elusive goal for many people, for whom the choice between nickel or brass bathroom fixtures is as irrelevant as the choice between a Mercedes and a BMW.

With this "shelter" issue, *ArchitectureBoston* looks at housing production. Over one million new homes are built each year by an industry that is marked by paradox and contradictions. The single-family house may be the great American dream, but it can also be the great American nightmare. Changing demographics, zoning and land-use regulations, and growing public concerns about sprawl are new challenges that influence one of the most enduring icons in our culture: the family home.

Nothing gets Americans more riled up than threats to the sanctity of the home; governmental intrusion in the form of quartering soldiers in private houses was one of the chief grievances cited in the Declaration of Independence. Our homes — whether house, apartment, or condo — are indeed our castles — a curiously European feudal image that underlies archetypal American notions about individual freedoms. Moreover, the housing industry itself is perhaps the last major industry in this country that is dominated by thousands of relatively small producers, essentially handcrafting each custom product for sale to individuals. Modern commercial and production ideas such as national chains, franchises, and buying cooperatives have made few inroads in an industry that has changed little since the postwar era.

It may seem obvious, then, that an industry of individuals for individuals has resisted government policies that would subvert our right to the modern version of 40 acres and a mule: two acres and an SUV. But there is plenty of evidence — as you'll see in the pages that follow — that the despoiling of rural landscapes and the escalating cost of housing are driven less by individual builders and consumers and more by the collective will of municipalities where residents striving to preserve community identity promote land-use regulations that tragically destroy the very character they are designed to protect.

The lack of affordable housing has reached critical levels in this region and threatens the sustained job growth and vigorous economy that paradoxically have fueled the current problem. But even a softening of economic conditions, as now appears likely, will ease housing pressures only temporarily. And a slow economy will have no effect on policies that encourage land consumption. More than ever, it is clear that cities and suburbs will solve their housing problems only by working together on a cooperative regional basis. A collective emphasis on "smart growth" planning will allow individuals to make smart choices.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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Editor
Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Managing Editor
Nancy Jenner

Editorial Assistant
Kate Kelly

Art Director
Judy Kohn

Contributing photographers:
Bob Kramer
Steve Rosenthal
Peter Vanderwarker

Advertising
Richard Vendola
BSA Sales Office
1645 Falmouth Rd #1A
Centerville, MA 02632
Tel: 800-996-3863
Fax: 508-790-4750
rvendola@capecod.net

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ArchitectureBoston explores the ways that architecture influences and is influenced by our society. We hope to expand professional and public understanding of the changing world of architecture by drawing on the rich intellectual, professional, and visionary resources of our region.

We invite story ideas that connect architecture to social, cultural, political, economic, or business trends. Editorial guidelines are posted at: www.architects.org/publication.html

Letters

"Why Bad Things Happen to Good Buildings" by Tom Schwartz (Winter 2000) charges architects to "meet the challenge that innovation presents." As a registered architect and professional specification writer, I am terrified that inexperienced architects will take this advice. The "bad things" that happened to the glass at the John Hancock Tower, the piles at 303 Congress Street, and the cantilevers at Fallingwater have very little to do with meeting challenges. These buildings were designed and constructed by the most skilled design and engineering teams — and failures still occurred. How can a less experienced architect expect to do better?

I believe "bad things happen" because the technical expertise necessary to keep up with an overheated construction market isn't there. Not only are design offices overburdened with fast-paced projects and staffing shortages, but the availability of materials and the new Massachusetts energy code also demand attention. Mr. Schwartz states that "with innovation comes reduced predictability and increased risk." I believe that statement applies to every project in every office in Boston today.

As a spec writer, I see projects from a reverse perspective. The specs are the neck of the funnel between the designer and the contractor, and too much fuzzy stuff is coming through. Designers need (and should have) constant technical support as their documents are produced. Mr. Schwartz states that "to meet the challenge that innovation presents, we must use the lessons of our history, coupled with sound technical fundamentals and a healthy dose of common sense."

In architecture, "lessons of our history" describe form and function, not rust and leaks. Creative people come into this profession for the chance to design. When clients ask for innovation, they still expect a building that works. Clients must be able to rely on the architect's knowledge of materials and the building code. Yet what would clients say if they knew that fewer than 5 percent of the registered architects in the state have taken the free seminars on the new energy code now in effect, and fewer than 10 percent of the offices have purchased a copy?

"Sound technical fundamentals" are a thing of the past. When the recession 12 years ago robbed the profession of a whole generation, it forced today's 50-person firm to rely on only one or two "technical gurus" to keep the firm's projects on track. The results are predictable: already, for example, we are seeing buildings less than 10 years old that must be taken down due to improper use of housewraps. As the new energy code requires an air barrier in the wall and vapor barrier in the roof, poor detailing and improper placement of insulation will cause gallons of water to condense in exterior walls each Boston winte (Make sure you do a dewpoint calculation fo every exterior wall type.) Small wonder that firms offering technical review of documents are booming.

The "healthy dose of common sense" seems to have left town also. Why are we using lead coated copper on canopies on elementary schools? Why do building-product manufacturers introduce products that aren't tested in our climate — only to withdraw them after multiple failures? When was the last time owners tested their sprinkler heads or the "first-glass" lead content in their water supply

For most architects, the cutting edge of technology is a knife at their own wrist. My advice is to be as innovative as possible by designing from within your knowledge of form, function, and materials. Grow from th constant learning that takes place as your projects are constructed. The process works when we get involved and work together.

Mark Kalin FAIA FCSI
Newton, Massachusetts

Thanks for bringing us a serious conversatio by an extraordinary group ("Forensic Examination: The Pathology of Boston's Seaport District," Fall 2000). One only wishes, in vain apparently, that this were the level of discourse in City Hall and the State House.

City Councilor Chuck Turner has described many of our current project debates as land wars. He's right. This is a land war — and a class war, too. The city is again the new economic frontier of real estate investment, and the casualties will be, as in the urban-renewal land war, everyday family and neighborhood life, and the natural environment.

Like any good discussion, this one brought out all the important questions.

The panel described well the double-edged sword of community: Is it about Balkanizatio and provincialism or about identity and stability? Can you really make a community out of a mobile stream of pre-procreative yuppies and an aged elite of empty-nesters alighting temporarily between the Cape hous and the Florida house — the only groups tha

ear economically able and willing to
ulate the new Boston?

l it addressed the dilemma of governance:
at is the meaning of public process in
iding how our land is used? Will our
ernment officials serve the ordinary mortals
o vote for them or the corporations that
d them?

rrently, the dominant mode of "progressive"
nking is to throw everything to the markets
operate governments primarily to run
erference for private corporations shackled
picky, stultifying regulations. Will an
eashed market lift all the boats in the
port? Will private "public" space be public if
have enough covenants? Does anyone care,
ong as it's clean, green, and safe?

iat role will designers play, as professionals
as citizens? Is there a moral framework for
on and process? What will rule: the
nomy or the society?

w, how will we get to the answers?

rley Kressel, Landscape Architect
ston

s is in response to "Letter from Cincinnati:
ield Guide to Meta-Narratives" (Winter
00), the delightful piece by Brenda Case
neer AIA. Ms. Scheer issued a call for
ories and, as one who never met a narrative
idn't like (well almost), I thought I'd add
the pile.

e Aronoff Center, or actually, the Aron
f-Center, is an early example of buildings
igned under the rule of law, with trial
yers being the concept consultants. The
on represents a snap shot of the systemic
pe of litigative design at that time. In the
f-Center case, the plaintiffs, a.k.a. gravity,
gnment, and orthagonalism, lost by a narrow
o-4 jury vote. Two of the total of 12 ballots
t were too chad-ridden to be counted, but
intent of their votes will be memorialized in
other structure, speculated to be designed by
nk Gehry sometime in the next four years.
d ideas never die, they just become context.

ristopher D. Williams AIA
ddletown, Connecticut

In his interesting letter in the Winter 2000 issue, Robert Luchetti AIA says, "If architects and interior designers keep providing less value with each step we take, we will rightly disappear." Interesting, because this is the third time that I've heard that comment this week. First, an officer of a major US construction company suggested to me that, in his view, the profession of architecture will be obsolete within 10 years. The next day, the director of business development of a multi-city architecture firm, whom I invited to address the faculty of architecture at my university said so, too. And now Luchetti!

My business-development friend is trying to counter such a disappearance by changing the scope of what his architecture firm provides to clients. He's enlarging that scope to include organizational design, corporate planning, financial planning, and management — literally "managing change" as it pertains to institutions and businesses and their real-estate/space issues. His firm is also enlarging the scope of liability it is willing to accept (this goes hand-in-hand). His new hires are not architects. This architect noted that his firm, fully employing over 300 people in five cities at the top of the economy, is barely able to generate a profit-making architecture. They're fully wired, quite efficient, and they actually make good buildings that their clients like. I like them, too. So what's the matter?

The late J.B. Jackson, a wonderful writer and historian of American landscape, once implied that America's influence on architecture was to make it a *commodity* (not the Vitruvian meaning). Land itself was valued in this country, not for its history, nor for the sense of place it imparted, and not because it had supported a particular family for generations. One of America's contributions to global culture has been to treat land, space, as *a commodity that could be traded.*

What that means to architecture is now being felt. Our profession, based on antique European attitudes toward land and building and place (attitudes that are even more deeply ensconced in our system of architectural education), is in for big trouble in a culture whose values are very much at odds with those. A commodity! And we're not even talking about how much business and education is now conducted in crudely designed *virtual* space.

Ready to edit an issue entitled, "After Architecture"?

Jeffrey Stein AIA
Boston

There has been a lonely copy of *Architecture-Boston* floating around our office for some time now. Like *Architecture Minnesota* and many other small regional publications, it was full of interesting commentary, good photography, and I must confess, the advertising was fun to look at. But what does Boston have to do with our lonely practice here in North Dakota? In a year of lean budgets, the subscription cost for *AB* is surely a luxury that we could do away with. No offense, please. But who the heck ordered it in the first place?

Today, the Winter 2000 issue arrived in the mail, and I commented to one of the student interns that it seemed silly to be getting such a frivolous publication. Then I sat down for my morning coffee and began to actually read. Before I could begin to enjoy the coffee, I had to extract my foot from my mouth. Between the "Material World" article and the photo essay on brick, it seems there is much to be learned from a regional magazine based in a region across the country.

It may be that political commentary and local reference is lost on me — not having the fortune to be in Boston. This is fine. But please keep up the good work, continue your course, and I'll keep reading, learning, and subscribing.

Randy Lieberg, Assoc. AIA
Johnson Laffen Architects
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Editor's response:
We send copies of *ArchitectureBoston* out into the hinterlands because:
1. Bostonians are really into that "Hub of the Universe" thing.
2. We're hoping David Kelley will notice, because it isn't fair that lawyers and teachers get all the good TV shows.
3. We really appreciate your paying for our Big Dig and hey, it's the least we can do.

In fact, *ArchitectureBoston* now distributes 15,000 copies nationally, including subscriptions and newstand sales. Johnson Laffen Architects receives a complimentary copy because Lonnie Laffen AIA is the president of AIA North Dakota. ■■■

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to: epadjen@architects.org or sent to: *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.



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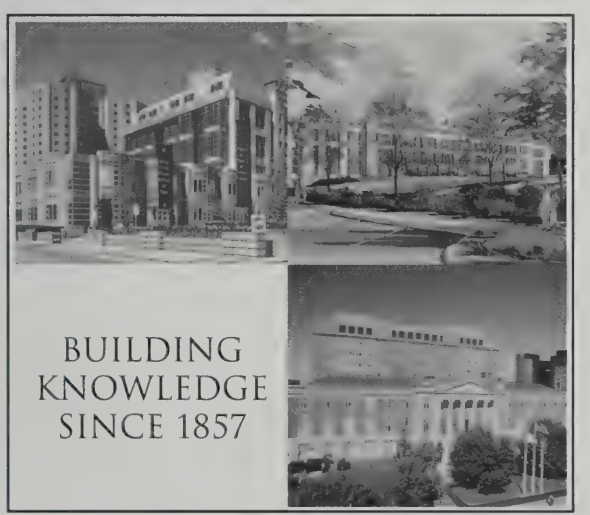
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The Home Makers

In suburb after suburb, new housing is sprouting up in seemingly identical subdivisions. Like it or hate it, *someone* is buying it. But who is building it? And what do they know that architects don't?

Participants:

Joseph Demshar AIA is director of design for AvalonBay, a real estate investment trust that develops and manages luxury multi-family rental housing throughout the United States, with approximately 40,000 apartment homes under ownership.

Jeremiah Eck FAIA is a principal of Jeremiah Eck Architects in Boston and a former lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He has taught many courses on the house and is currently writing a book, *The Timeless House*, which will be published by Taunton Press in 2001.

Douglas Govan AIA is chief designer for Acorn Structures/Deck House in Acton, Massachusetts, designers and manufacturers, producing 200 to 300 houses worldwide each year.

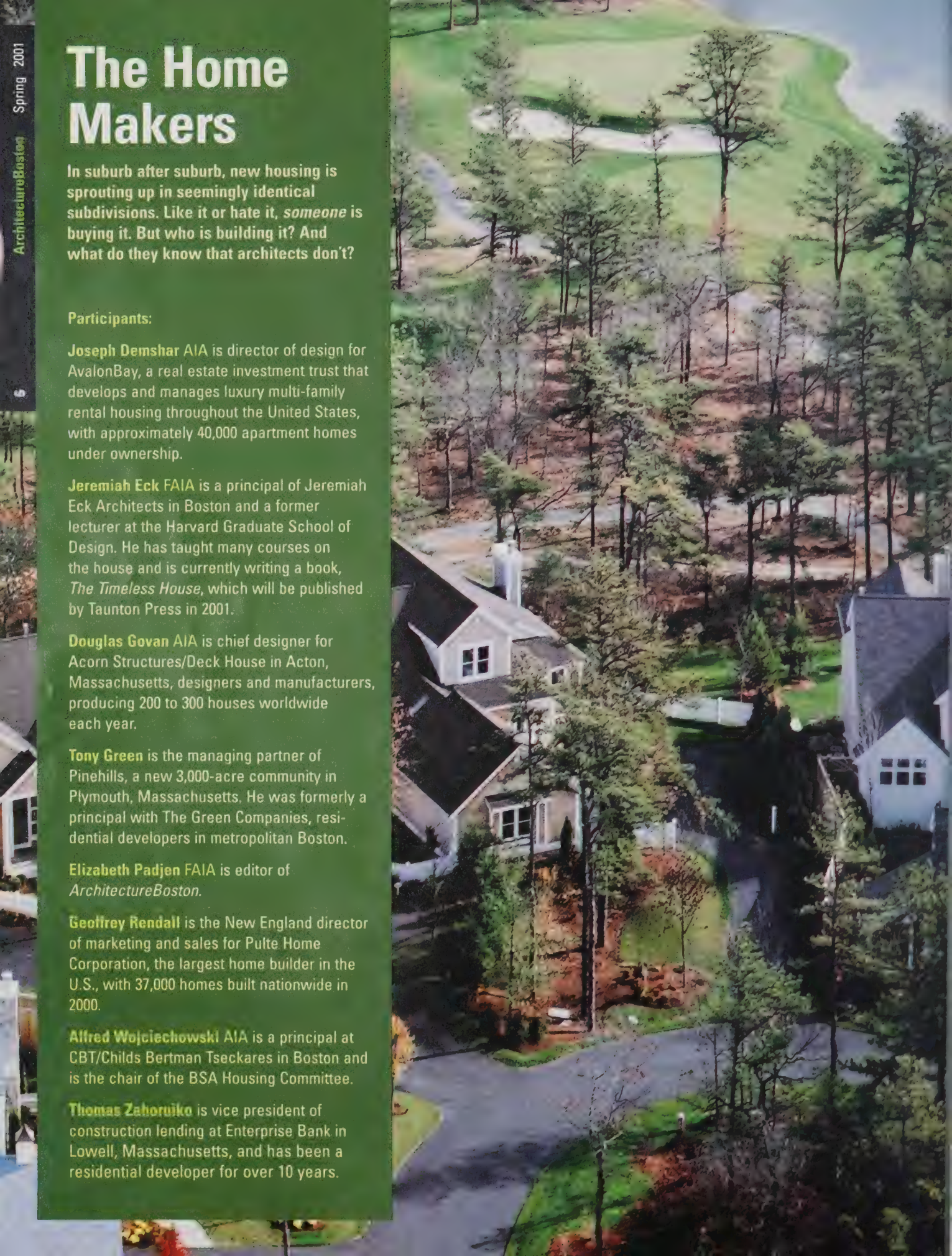
Tony Green is the managing partner of Pinehills, a new 3,000-acre community in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He was formerly a principal with The Green Companies, residential developers in metropolitan Boston.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Geoffrey Rendall is the New England director of marketing and sales for Pulte Home Corporation, the largest home builder in the U.S., with 37,000 homes built nationwide in 2000.

Alfred Wojciechowski AIA is a principal at CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares in Boston and is the chair of the BSA Housing Committee.

Thomas Zahoruiko is vice president of construction lending at Enterprise Bank in Lowell, Massachusetts, and has been a residential developer for over 10 years.



zabeth Padjen: Architects tend to look at so-called uilder houses" or "production" houses with smug f-righteousness — they talk about the builders and yers of new suburban housing as if they were tulant children who aren't eating their broccoli. But ore and more of these houses are built, with very le input from mainstream architects. It's led me to uriosity about the market, because something is viously going on that architects don't understand otherwise, they'd have a greater influence on it. hat drives the market? What do consumers want?

seph Demshar: Right now, the market is ponding to demographic shifts. We're finding that e greatest potential growth in our markets is in the der-25 age group and the over-45 age group. These e either people who are graduating from college d entering the housing market or the baby-boomers o are now becoming empty-nesters. And the pty-nester market is different from the senior using market — they don't want the isolation of a mmunity that's totally elderly. They want an iting, active lifestyle.

remiah Eck: Are you saying that the 25-to-45 age oup is stable?

seph Demshar: There's still a market in that oup, but there won't be much growth in it.

uglas Govan: There are two trends that we see at fit the markets that Joe is describing. One is the er-45 couple who are building a second home in a sirable location, larger than second homes used to , with the intent of retiring to it later. The other, rhaps a result of the dot-com phenomenon, is that ere are people of all ages, including young clients, th large budgets.

offrey Rendall: We're also seeing a market that driven by traditional preferences — most people efer a single-family detached house on a deeded lot. me people will settle for attached housing for st reasons, or sometimes for cultural and social asons. But the preference is to get something that oks like, tastes like, feels like, and acts like a single-nily detached home. So that's something that I see the resistance to some forms of cluster zoning, me forms of zero-lot-line zoning, and most efforts push the masses into more dense housing. We uild cluster homes and they do very well, but usually ey do very well when the market's hot and people st want a house. In a market like this, it's tough make a lot of sense out of things. Sure, a lot of ople are moving into the 55-and-older category. ut I think in general that that market's been over-ighted. Those people have an awful lot of housing choices. It's hard to get a grip on where they're going to go and what they're going to spend and what they want in a home, although they're certainly filling up communities that are targeted to a higher-age group. The younger group is a little more predictable.

As for the affordable end — it's tough in Massachusetts right now. We have had a bear of a time trying to find any site that will allow us to do an affordable development — and when I say "affordable" I mean something that's reasonable for a young family. We have a traditional subdivision in Worcester now that is doing very well. The houses are in the low $200s. And that's considered affordable.

Jeremiah Eck: How many square feet are they?

Geoffrey Rendall: Eighteen-hundred square feet. So they're selling for a little more than $100 a square foot. We're building them for $75 to $85 a square foot, depending on what you include in the costs. It was, frankly, a risk for us, but it's done very well. The town is gentrifying in some respects, and the growth along Route 495 is starting to spill over into Worcester. It's hard to find anything "affordable" inside the 495 beltway.

Elizabeth Padjen: You're not building much affordable housing, then, because of the lack of land rather than because of higher profit margins in more expensive housing?

Geoffrey Rendall: Right. It's very hard to overcome a bad land purchase by tweaking specifications and lowering construction costs. So, we're very cautious about spending too much for land. And land is very expensive right now.

Douglas Govan: There is a state initiative that addresses the problem of affordability in the suburbs — it says to cities and towns that if they expect to receive the level of state aid that they've been used to, they're going to have to come up with as much as 10 percent of their housing stock qualifying as affordable housing. And the positive side of that initiative, besides developing and supporting the market, is that towns are beginning to wake up to the effects of a growing phenomenon: builders are buying modest houses, tearing them down, and replacing them with 5,000-square-foot, even 10,000-square-foot houses. That is sometimes the only new housing that's available. And that means that there's no place in some towns for young people who grew up there, or for the teachers and police, or for people who have lived there all their lives and want to stay and retire to something smaller.

Facing page:
Houses overlooking golf course and pond at Pinehills in Plymouth, Masschusetts.

Thomas Zahoruiko: I've been with Enterprise Bank for a year; I was also a lender 15 years ago. For most of the '90s I was developing single-family detached units in the North Andover area — I built probably 10 or 15 percent of the stock in North Andover in the '90s. So I look at these issues from both a production and a financial perspective as opposed to a marketing perspective. The affordability issue is something that's near and dear to me. I've been living and building in the town of North Andover — which is considered a very affluent community, and where affordability is anything under $400,000 or $500,000. I don't think there's anything on the market that's new that's under a half million dollars right now. Why — is it the cost of land? That may be part of it. But the bigger issue is the regulatory environment that restricts the use of the land. Take a typical suburban community like North Andover, which has two-acre zoning. But you may really need a gross area of three or four acres for every new unit to be produced, because of lot configurations, geometry, overlay districts, watershed protection, drainage issues, stormwater management, wetlands conflicts, contiguous building area requirements — all of those things, which drive up the sprawl effect and the consumption of land per unit produced.

Most suburban communities don't have any provision for any multi-family housing whatsoever. The average lot size of the existing stock in an older community is probably a third of an acre. Compare that to the three or four acres gross that you really need to produce new housing. If an acre costs $100,000 and you need four of them to build a house, you start at a very high level. As Geoff mentioned, most people want a single-family detached house in the suburbs. But they don't really care if they're five feet away from their neighbor or 25 feet or 50 feet away. They just want to have their own private space. So, you can conceivably put six or eight units very comfortably on an acre in most suburban environments. And instead of having four acres per unit, you may have six units per acre, and all of a sudden the cost of land goes from $400,000 per unit down to roughly $17,000 per unit. It is really that simple. The issue is the way we use the land, not the land cost itself.

Alfred Wojciechowski: And the regulations that control the way we use the land tend to be absolute. They don't offer flexibility or a range of possibilities that would allow you to look at a whole subdivision more creatively. Maybe five feet or 25 feet between houses is not much of an issue for many people, because they just want to see single-family housing. But when the zoning is written, everything will be set at 25 feet.

Tony Green: Not every town looks at zoning that way. The town of Plymouth created new zoning that is the antithesis of grid subdivision — "open-space, mixed-use development." The Pinehills experience has been different — but it's unusual both in its size and the way in which it was permitted. It's 3,000 acres. Three thousand acres is a little bigger than the town of Belmont, but it's contained within the town of Plymouth. Our permit allows 2,854 houses and 1.3 million square feet of commercial space, and up to four golf courses with trails and other recreation. But we will only build on 30 percent of the land, leaving 70 percent as open space, including golf and other recreation.

Elizabeth Padjen: What kind of housing are you providing?

Tony Green: We're primarily oriented to empty-nesters, demographically a giant gap in the whole region. Plymouth is a three-acre-zoning town, but we have some lots under 6,000 square feet. We received a special permit after working with the town under an overlay zone called "open space/mixed-use development." We started permitting in June of 1997 and began construction in 1999.

Elizabeth Padjen: Several of you seem to be suggesting that the market would actually embrace housing on much smaller lots than we're seeing right now, that people don't mind hanging over their fence and seeing their neighbors' dogs and cats and kids and laundry. Is that really true?

Joseph Demshar: As an exclusive multi-family builder, I would say yes, because in Massachusetts we're 99 percent occupied. And our market is very discretionary — people who are renting by choice, not by necessity.

Jeremiah Eck: Don't we have to sort out what market we're talking about here?

Elizabeth Padjen: I'd like to know about the average buyers, people who may not be worrying about the planning and design issues that occupy us. But they go out, they want to buy a house, and they know what they want. I'd like to know more about how they make choices. Suddenly we see a proliferation of 7,000-square-foot houses on two or three acres. Is that driven by regulatory issues, or is it driven by market desire?

Thomas Zahoruiko: Nine years ago I received approval in the town of North Andover for the first cluster subdivision in that town. It was 40 homes on 80 acres. We consolidated those homes on the 22 or so acres; the other 70 percent was a permanent preserve. After the planning board voted to approve the plan, the chairman said, "Well, good luck, Tom. You think anybody's going to want to move to North Andover and not live on two acres, go ahead." Now, this was 1991 and the market was not that good. We started and finished 38 units in 38 months. And had people waiting out the door in the worst economy in most memories for these units on half-acre lots. Which is not necessarily a small lot, but is certainly smaller than what was expected in that community.

Those houses sold for $185,000 to $225,000. I live in that subdivision. And most of those folks who live there would just as soon have a smaller lot than what they have. It's an interesting phenomenon. I'm not saying that it applies to everybody — there will always be people who want a large estate. I'm working now on a project with houses on 30,000-square-foot lots that will sell in the $800,000-to-$1,000,000 range. It's the third cluster subdivision that we've done with three-quarter-acre or smaller lots. And the buyers range from retired folks with no kids to single people to families with little kids to families with college-age kids. It appeals to buyers across the spectrum.

Geoffrey Rendall: We just don't see that. Clearly the households without children are going to accept small lots much more readily. And buyers in towns without other options are going to accept cluster developments more readily. But in the 495 belt and suburbs with move-up families, we find that lot size is very important. Very important.

Douglas Govan: I have a slightly different perspective. The people who come to us are looking for a custom house with a degree of predictability. They can afford what they want, and want what they can afford. The majority of them will be spending $500,000 to $750,000. I am encouraged, however, that more and more people are walking in the door with copies of *The Not So Big House* — the best-seller about building smaller, more tightly designed, more livable houses. There seems to be a shift, at least in some people's minds, toward questioning the standard of the big house on a big lot.

Jeremiah Eck: But we're still talking about different sectors of the market. Which sector or owner are we discussing? The patron, client, consumer, or victim? I assume that the patron and the victim are not our market. But the difference between the consumer and the client is enormous, and it may well be the difference between the 37,000 homes a year built by the developers in this discussion and the 10 a year designed by a firm like mine. We started this discussion with the notion that architects feel they have to make homebuyers eat their broccoli. But that's not going to happen. I'm wondering why homebuyers find a developer house so much more appealing than an architect house. Is it the consumer versus the client? Is it the process? Is it the money? Is it the design? What is it that drives this giant chasm between the 1.3 million houses that get built in a year and the 1 percent of those that are designed by architects — the way architects were taught to design them.

Tony Green: I think the biggest confusion is exactly the one that we're experiencing in this discussion: Who are the buyers? There are 1.3 million new houses constructed annually. Of those, only a million are bought; the rest are rented or built by individuals for themselves. But there are another five million houses that are bought that are existing houses. And all those people are home consumers, too. People — at a ratio of five-to-one — choose to buy existing houses over new houses. And that suggests that time is an incredibly important factor that influences a whole series of decisions. The time that it takes to be a buyer of a custom-designed home, or even of a customized home, is gigantic compared to the time it takes to buy an existing house.



rendering by Dongik Lee

Rollins Square multi-family housing, South End, Boston by CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares.

Geoffrey Rendall: It's a good point. Buyers have different levels of interest in terms of how much time and energy they want to spend in the design of their home. All of Pulte's homes are designed by architects, but I would say that 90 percent of our buyers don't want to spend the time that would be necessary to work with an architect to design a custom home. They want to have some input, and they want to change a few things, but they're only willing to spend a day, maybe three days, doing it. We get over that by pre-designing as many options as we can, pricing them, and having them available for the customer right there. And that has broad appeal to people — it gives them the sense that they've customized the home that they're going to share with their families. But on the other hand, it



photo: Anton Grassl



photo: Anton Grassl

Architect-designed houses within the context of existing suburban subdivisions, by Jeremiah Eck Architects.

doesn't take them away from their work and their day-to-day life. A lot of them have no interest in working on the design of their home. They just want to move in and decorate it.

Elizabeth Padjen: That's going to shock a lot of architects.

Joseph Demshar: My wife is also an architect, and she recently designed a house with a free-standing bathtub in the middle of the master-bedroom suite. As production builders, we wouldn't touch that — too risky for our stock-holders. I don't think "custom" is the right word for the architect-designed home. "Idiosyncratic," maybe, which I mean as a compliment, because the architect brings out what the individual client really wants. Production builders can't take that risk. But we're building a series of high-rise towers with loft-type apartments in San Francisco, and we've hired respected, signature architects — Fisher Friedman and Backen Arrigoni & Ross. We're very serious about getting the mix right and being very thoughtful about the design. But as soon as you start to do something different, you don't know if you're going to get it right. Our biggest concern with architects who do something different is the simple stuff — you can't fit a queen-sized bed and a dresser, or there isn't enough closet space.

Jeremiah Eck: But aren't you attacking the problem from the wrong end? Isn't it really the consumers who are determining what their house is? It's the client who determines what my design for a house is.

Thomas Zahoruiko: One of the things that's different here in New England, in greater Boston especially, is the fact that we have a severe shortage of permittable building lots. So, the interests that control those lots really don't have a huge incentive to let the process be slowed down in any way, including taking the time to be creative. We have a supply and demand problem, and almost anything that gets produced is going to get bought if it's at all reasonable in price, even if it's the same old box that was built before.

Alfred Wojciechowski: We're making a distinction between the single architect who's designing 10 houses a year and the developers who hire firms and produce hundreds, even thousands of houses. But in fact, they're both dealing with a lot of the same issues — making

sure the bed fits, making sure the closets are adequate, and understanding front entries and back doors. And a lot of firms take these things very seriously, because they deal with issues of usability and emotional appeal.

Jeremiah Eck: The big guys here are saying they have architects designing houses, and I appreciate that, but the fact is they're not designing houses the way little guys like me are designing houses. We consider the site, not just the landscape, in a very intimate way. We look at the needs of the particular client in a very particular way, idiosyncratic or not. Our houses don't look like the parts have been slapped together, but have some sense of balance. And if there's some "amenity" inside, a fireplace or a stair, it's used in a way that makes some sense. That takes a great deal of time, not just for me but also for this real live person who is my client. And so I'm very discouraged when I hear you guys saying nobody wants to spend the time — you haven't said money — and that the process makes it too hard.

Geoffrey Rendall: When house prices in Massachusetts grow $40,000 in two years, money isn't the issue. It really isn't. It's time. People want to invest a certain amount of time, emotion, and energy in designing their home, but they've got a budget for that and it ranges from a day to a couple of weekends. Because the rest of their life is tied up with their jobs and other interests.

Jeremiah Eck: You're spending $500,000 or a million dollars, and you're only going to spend two or three days thinking about that? In what other endeavor would we invest that kind of money without spending a good deal of time researching it, pouring our hearts into it, making sure it was the right decision — other than playing the stock market? People really don't care?

Joseph Demshar: Because they know someone else has thought about it. We've been doing this for 20 years, and we constantly pore over plans and think about functionality and work with architects. So I would counter that by saying every home we offer has 20 years of thought into it.

Elizabeth Padjen: Is design simply not important to many people?

Geoffrey Rendall: Design is one thing on the list. But it's not always at the top. Homebuyers have a lot of other things on their lists, too — interior finishes, the quality of the neighborhood and its location, price, the size and shape of the lot — and they have to balance those things against the different priorities of other household members

Douglas Govan: There is design on the one hand and image on the other. And then there's this thing called "curb appeal." But what a lot of people are really looking for is predictability — it's a concern expressed repeatedly in our market research.

Tony Green: I believe people will pay more for good design, but the integration of the home with the landscape — the choice of site and the preservation of the natural setting — is as important or more important than the architecture or the floor plan. That idyllic image of rooted permanence — a house set into the landscape — is powerful.

Elizabeth Padjen: I'm curious about the design process in a big company like Pulte. How does a house design evolve? And how does it influence other builders? Smaller builders probably look at an organization as large and successful as Pulte and figure it knows what it's doing — and end up copying the latest Pulte model. I suspect we're seeing the development of a new kind of vernacular housing.

Geoffrey Rendall: One statistic that has always struck me is that 10 percent of homes in America are built by the 100 biggest builders in America. Which means that 90 percent of the homes in America are built by everyone else. So this is a business of small companies. One of the advantages of working for a big company like Pulte is that we're talking to homebuilders and home marketers and home designers all the time. To some extent, we're a laboratory of design — we're always developing new ideas. We listen to the customer, because that's where the bills are paid. So we do an awful lot of market research. We spend a lot of time on demographics, on focus groups, on listening to customers in our sales centers, and on listening to our sales managers on the sites, who tell us what customers want. Our corporate view is that our people in the field, who talk to the customers and to the subcontractors, are doing the work of the company. When we bring them all together, we talk about design issues, and we implement those changes. And so our floor plans are continually evolving as customers talk about more space for computer rooms, more flexible space, more great rooms, higher-volume ceilings — all those kind of things.

Elizabeth Padjen: If everyone is asking for a fanlight over the front door, then that's what your next houses will have?

Geoffrey Rendall: Practically speaking, that's how we do it. We have a base floor plan that's evolved over many years. Then we'll have a list of options, maybe 30 or 40, that could be applied to that plan. But if a buyer comes up with an idea that we haven't thought of and that fits into the plan, we'll build it. If we sell two of those, we'll start thinking about it seriously. If we sell four or five of those, we'll start saying, hey, this ought to be a standard option.

Jeremiah Eck: Do you ever go back and ask them, "Were you right in your decision? Was your initial thinking correct, or is there something missing?"

Geoffrey Rendall: We do. We survey them after they're in the home for a month, and then we do it again after their first year. So we try to ferret out any problems. But I think most of our plans, because they're customer-driven and not theoretically driven or driven by one person or one mind, appeal to a broad spectrum of people.

Elizabeth Padjen: I wonder if that notion of a time-tested plan isn't what appeals to that vast majority of homebuyers who buy existing houses. A lot of those houses have a basic four-square plan. And the beauty of the four-square plan is its flexibility. The style might vary — maybe it's Georgian or Federalist, maybe it's Gothic Revival or Victorian — but its fundamental simplicity and its symmetry have made it very adaptable over time. What might have been a front parlor is now a home office, and what might have been the back pantry is now, who knows, a mud room for ski equipment.

Tony Green: But I think things are changing there, too, and aging baby-boomers are driving it. You see it in the demand for features like master bedrooms on the first floor, not upstairs as in those older houses. We run a workshop at Pinehills to help people be better home buyers. One of the things that we might ask a couple to do is to draw their existing home, and then we ask each of them to distinguish by color their own rooms and the rooms they share. Usually the striking thing is the number of rooms left uncolored, unused. It turns out that it's a complicated issue to figure out how to create a new house by looking at the house you already live in. How do you get someone to think critically about what they really do, how they really live? But if you can think objectively about how you use your house, you can apply the same thinking to your neighborhood. And you will be a better home buyer. About 700 people have participated in these workshops. There are lots of common themes, but there are lots of differences, too. I have a close friend from college. He's 44-years-old and an empty-nester. My great-uncle is 96-years-old and he's an empty nester, too. Now, those guys have pretty different ideas about what they'd like to do with their day and the kind of house that they'd like to live in. But they fit the same category. If you start applying income variables, you get even more market segments. And empty nesters have very different ideas about where they want to live — in the country, within walking distance to shopping, in a traditional neighborhood, in an urban downtown. It's a blurry macro market; in fact, households with school-age children generally represent only 20 to 25 percent of the households



photo courtesy AvalonBay

Avalon Estates
Hull, Massachusetts
by AvalonBay

in a community. And the big homebuilders can only meet some of the needs of such a diverse market.

Jeremiah Eck: Approximately half of all the single-family houses in this country have been built in the last 50 years. But I think most people feel that something is wrong — there's a growing, underlying discontent with what we've been doing. Maybe we need to support our local aesthetic police more — to make sure that there's someone in the building department with training and ability who can apply objective criteria to determining if a house is beautiful or not.

Alfred Wojciechowski: I support the aesthetic police, but in reality, beauty is rarely a black-or-white issue. Aesthetic concerns are a tremendous gray area.

Thomas Zahoruiko: I read a lot of bylaws, and one of the obvious things about them is that aesthetic-related bylaws focus on ensuring that designs are consistent and very much the same. I have yet to read a bylaw that actually promotes design diversity.

Tony Green: There are two issues that upset people the most about new developments, I think, and they're very different. One is that so much looks the same. Levittown was the original poster-child for that issue, and now, ironically, it's the best answer to that. When Levittown was built, all the houses were identical, row after row, street after street, without a stick of landscaping. If you go back there now, none of the houses look alike because the landscape has grown and everybody's added on or changed the look of the houses. The same thing is going to happen to the houses that are built today — people are going to add on, change, move, redo. That's a whole different issue from the second issue that upsets people — seeing houses in every old woodlot and field. And that's a question of zoning. Most towns, in order to make things stay the same, have actually caused this very phenomenon by requiring large lots, wide frontage, fewer homes to the acre. They've developed rules based on geometry. But land, particularly in this region, has nothing to do with geometry. The rules are counter-productive and yet the solution — more density in the right places — seems counter-intuitive.

Geoffrey Rendall: Tony is right. You can look at photos of Victorian neighborhoods in older communities right after they were built — they have little, two-inch-caliper elm trees stuck in the front yards, the houses are lined up straight, and they look like the worst subdivision you can imagine. And today, they're gorgeous. Everybody would want to live there.

Tony Green: It helps to remember that people vote with their dollars. And our economy is set up so that, theoretically, people are paying for what they believe is quality. Nobody intentionally spends money on something they don't think is good. You might choose to do things differently from your neighbor or your friend, but being able to make that choice is part of the foundation of our whole country.

Elizabeth Padjen: Isn't that a modern phenomenon, though? In the past, perhaps those choices existed to some degree, but they were much more limited. They were limited by technology, needs, materials. And by a far more pervasive common culture than we know today. So choices were limited by things other than regulatory means. Today we see a much greater range of choice.

Joseph Demshar: This is a dynamic industry that responds to the choices people make, because people do vote with their pocketbook.

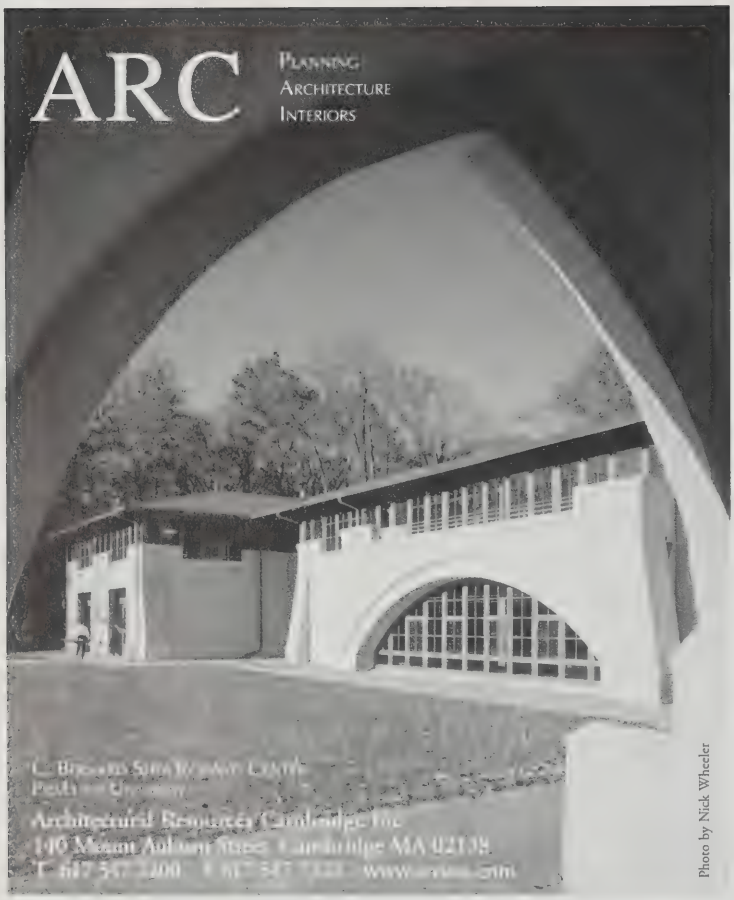
Alfred Wojciechowski: The pocketbooks we've been talking about are pretty big — we've been talking about this magic figure of $500,000. Which may, to us, seem like an average cost for a house. But I think it's an extraordinary number. I would like to see equivalent energy put into design and livability issues for dwellings that cost substantially less than that. I would like to think that architects could accommodate someone who walks in and says, "I don't have a lot of money. The total project cost including the site is $250,000. Will you take my commission?" And the reason I bring this up is that good design does require time and money.

Jeremiah Eck: I just did one of those $250,000 houses. And the simple solution was this: I told the client, "I'll do it, but I'm only going to give you six sheets [of drawings], and they will be the six sheets that my 25 years of experience tell me are necessary to build a nice little house." But I think, in general, that our culture has made money the difference between whether you have something that's beautiful or not. In the past, beauty wasn't a function of money.

Douglas Govan: I would suggest that some of the ugliest houses are examples of situations where there was lots of money to spend.

Geoffrey Rendall: But beauty is also a taste issue. One thing that we're seeing here in New England is a large market for houses that are not traditional New England homes. They appeal directly to the people moving into New England from other areas of the country. Moreover, a huge part of the market in the western suburbs of Boston is people from other parts of the world. And their taste is different. People are bringing with them their own ideas of what a good home is and saying, We want this in our home.

I do think things are changing. I believe most people want a single-family detached home on a lot if they can have it. But the reason we're going to get away from this is because we're chewing up all the available land close to the employment areas. We've got to continue to work to find ways to build housing that is less land-intensive but at the same time appealing, practical, and affordable. ■■■



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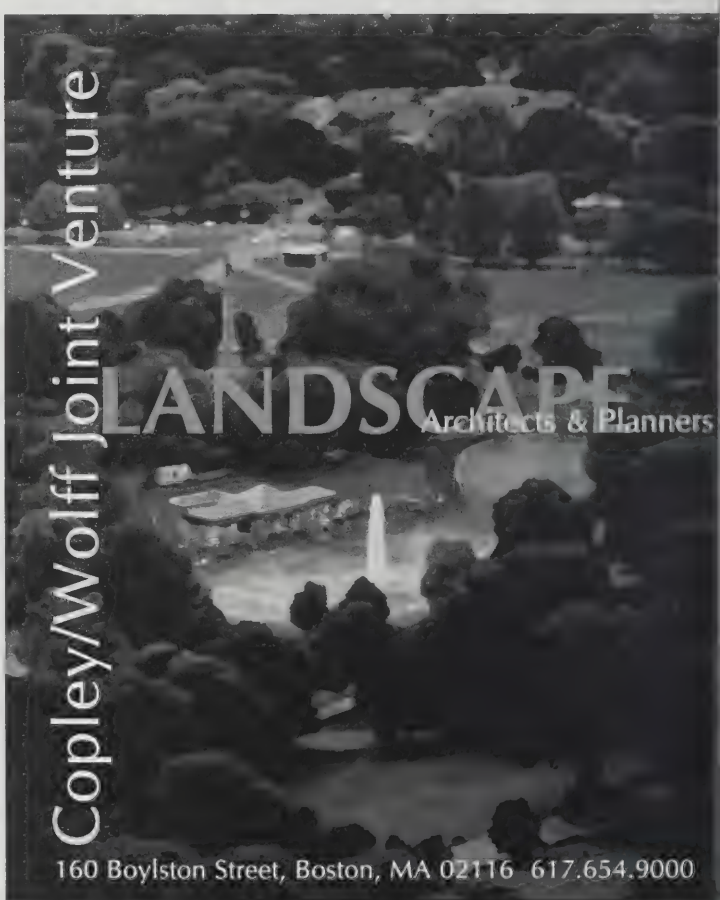


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by Willy Sclarsic AIA

We are not in first place yet — we are still only number three — but with the fastest rate-of-rise of residential costs in the nation, metropolitan Boston should soon be first. If we sustain our current momentum, we will soon enjoy the highest cost of housing in the United States.

What is the secret of our success? Some say it's the high cost of land. Others blame the difficulty and unpredictability of obtaining required permits, or the lack of infrastructure, or the unregulated and volatile community review and approval process, or pre-emptive environmental regulation, or high construction costs.

The cause may in fact be some or all of the above. The cause of the cause, however, can be found in the anti-housing policies implemented in the last two decades by cities and towns in metropolitan Boston. As a direct result of these policies, the supply of new housing, particularly housing for low-income and working-income individuals and families, has been severely restricted. As the supply of new housing grew at a slow and inadequate pace, the demand for housing, fueled by an expanding economy, increased enough to reduce vacancy rates to extremely low levels, creating a competitive climate and resulting in constant upward pressure on residential rents and sale prices.

In most cases, cities and towns have refused to accept any planning responsibility for the region's constantly growing and evolving housing needs. They have refused to implement any meaningful process to assess the region's diverse and complex housing needs and to plan — with vision, specificity, and purpose — to meet them.

Instead, they have retreated behind a community veto process, which has created an unreliable and unpredictable approval process, resulting in an unmanageable level of financial risk for would-be developers. This situation has discouraged and dissuaded most non-profit and for-profit housing providers. Although a few high-income projects have been financially strong enough, and a few low-income projects have been politically strong enough to survive their development process, the number of units produced has been far short of the demand. The community review and

approval process was originally intended to allow communities and neighborhoods to preserve their character, identity, and populations. In many cases, particularly in the city of Boston, the process has had the opposite result. The increased value of real estate, caused by the lack of supply, has enticed many long-time residents to sell their properties and relocate, and sharp rent increases have forced many other long-time residents to leave their no-longer-affordable neighborhoods. This economic transition is significantly changing the demographics of neighborhoods. A carefully managed planning and zoning process could have identified, designated, and endorsed areas for new housing development, thereby increasing the supply and easing the price pressures caused by unsatisfied demand. New housing production would have protected long-time neighborhood residents much better than the municipal policies that were specifically designed to discourage it.

Can this situation be corrected?

Can a climate be created that will allow for the resumption of housing production, with a variety of units designed to meet the diverse and evolving needs of individual communities, and in numbers significant enough to adequately increase the supply? Probably not! Only a thorough, binding, planning process, complemented by clear, reliable zoning that identifies areas where new housing is desired and allowed, will reduce uncertainty, risk, and community conflicts. In most of the United States, housing is plentiful, of good quality, and affordable. This housing responds to market demand and to a clearly articulated planning and zoning process. The secure and predictable development climate that prevails in much of the rest of the country minimizes risk and encourages residential development in numbers adequate to meet demand, resulting in much more affordable and marketable housing costs. The implementation of such a planning process locally would require a regional approach and a good deal of political will — neither of which has been recently experienced here.

Should this situation be corrected?

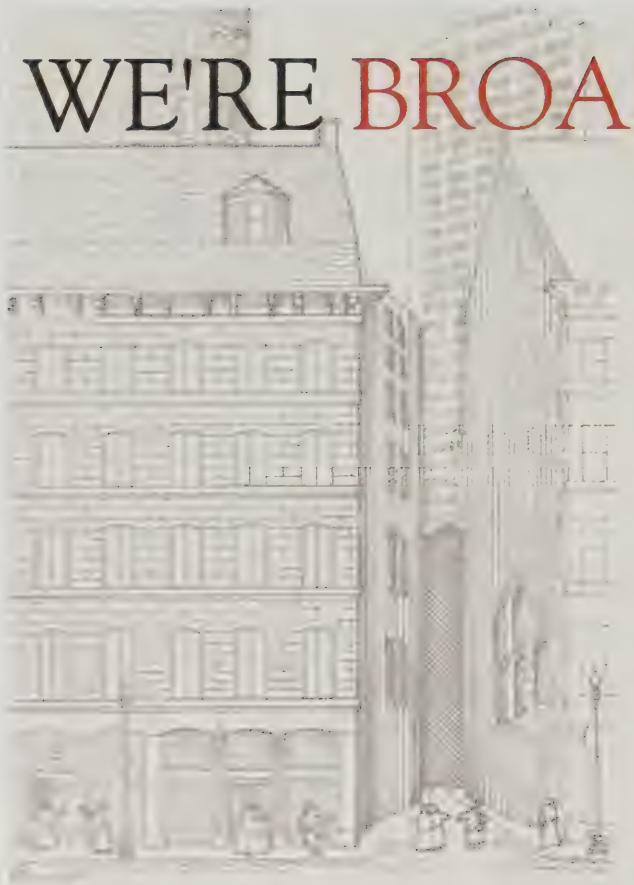
The high cost of housing is not a problem for everyone. It is not a problem for home-sellers, for landlords, for real estate agents, or for real-estate tax assessors. It is however a long-range problem for young workers, for renters, for young families, for the low-income elderly, and, increasingly, for middle-income people. These groups will be forced to assume a high level of cost or debt in order to pay for housing, resulting in a certain decline in their standard of living. Housing costs will be a significant problem for Boston and other similar older metropolitan areas, where the high cost of housing will eventually have a tempering effect on the ability of expanding economies to attract and retain a work force. The unavailability and unaffordability of housing will eventually lead to relocation of this workforce to other more affordable parts of the country. Unless the current direction is corrected, older metropolitan areas may eventually consist of only rich and poor residents.

If livable cities are the antidote to suburban sprawl, then metropolitan Boston must remain livable, not just downtown, but in all its neighborhoods and surrounding cities and towns. Focused and meaningful planning and zoning will be necessary to successfully address and resolve the current housing problem. However, in order to preserve the values of Boston's heritage, such planning and zoning must be part of a powerful new urban vision.

New housing should not be built in an uncoordinated, project-by-project basis, but should be part of a new urban visionary context designed to allow Boston to remain attractive and livable in the 21st century, while creating a new image for the neighborhoods. In the mid-19th century, many European cities struggled with similar issues. In Paris, Baron Haussmann implemented a new visionary system of boulevards as organizing elements of a new masterplan. However, it was the housing built on each side of these boulevards that created the new image of Paris and also paid for the costs of the construction of the masterplan.

Bostonians may be more familiar with the somewhat later but similarly successful process that created the Back Bay. The implementation of a well-managed, meaningful, and visionary planning process, grounded in well-defined, reliable clear zoning could offer a comprehensive solution. It would help to reduce the adversarial relationship between communities and development entities and define new directions for aging neighborhoods, particularly for their main streets. Boston and its neighbors, while preserving the best elements and character of a proud heritage, must accept the responsibility for bold, visionary leadership, and actively enable the kind of new development required to preserve livable and affordable environments in the 21st century. ■■■

Willy Sclarsic AIA is senior vice president of Wingate Development Corp. and co-chair of the BSA Housing Committee.



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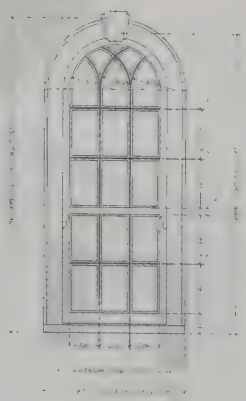
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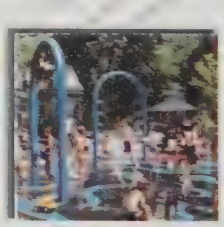
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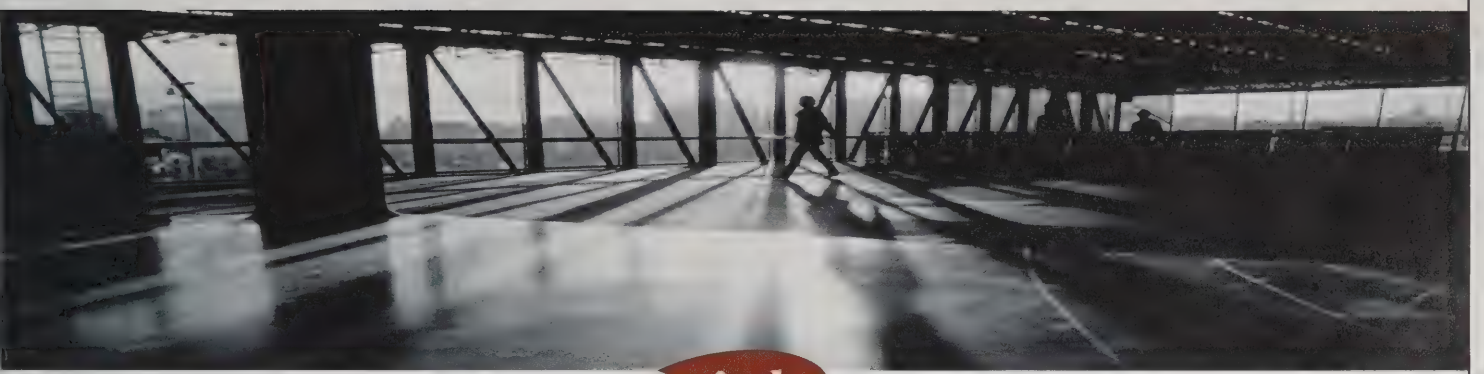




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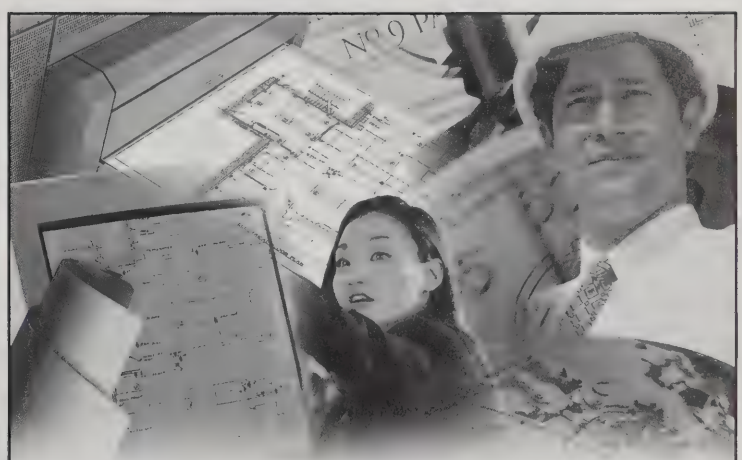
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Home Pages:

The world of "shelter" magazines

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Traditional Home. *Metropolitan Home. Better Homes and Gardens. House and Garden. Old House Journal...Remodeling Ideas. Window and Wall Ideas. Home Plan Ideas...Country Homes. Southern Living. Log Home Living. American Homestyle....*

Welcome to the world of the "shelter" magazines — a world much larger than you might think. I recently counted 14 titles at the checkout at my local grocery. My local pharmacy? 22. And Out-of-Town News in Harvard Square — the granddaddy of local newsstands — had 78. 78! And that's not counting the architecture trade journals, the landscape and gardening magazines, or all those house-plan catalogues. You know these magazines. The publishing industry calls them "shelter mags," but we know them as the ones we slyly slip into our shopping carts, hidden by that issue of *Harper's*. Distinct from the few "legitimate" architectural publications — the ones that architects commonly subscribe to — shelter magazines are that genre of popular publications that discuss the home.

Hottest Bath Looks!
33 Pages of Products and Ideas!
7 Perfect Powder Rooms!!
What's New? Leather and Cork Floors!

Try reading several of these at once. If your home didn't seem inadequate, it will now. When looking at these magazines covers side-by-side, several trends emerge. The titles tend to focus on specialized aesthetic themes — Southern style or Modern decor — or on specific building elements — "kitchen and bath" or "window and wall." Regardless of focus, each magazine generally follows a similar formula: public glimpses into the private lives of the rich and famous, real-life stories, latest must-haves, and helpful how-to's. They purport to discuss not only decoration, but more important, *lifestyle*. But don't be fooled. Their real goal is to influence how we shop. The final message remains clear: What you have is not right. It's too fat, too thin, too last-year; with this tummy tuck or that kitchen rehab or this new flooring product, you too will have a happier home and thus a happier life. In short, these are the women's magazines for the housing industry.

However, to simply disregard these magazines for their blatant consumerism or dismiss them as yet another example of skin-deep design in our much-maligned suburbs fails to recognize their collective power. I am one of those who like to complain about the lack of public discussion about architecture in this country. But as I counted these titles, I began to wonder if maybe, just maybe, I had stumbled upon evidence of an enormous discussion going on around me. I had been looking in the wrong place.

A home — in whatever form we may recognize — is the strongest connection most people have towards a building. The home is the building-block of our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. With their focus on the home, these magazines shape public perceptions about the house, the built environment, and thus about architecture. One big-city architecture critic can't possibly match this vast array of voices.

475 Top Manufacturers!
134 Family Friendly Home Plans!
23 pages of Traditional and Regional Favorites!
10 Top Furniture Trends to Take Home!
All the Best Buys!

This is big business. Through the 20th century, the United States was purposely transformed from a nation of urban renters to a nation of suburban owners. In 1931, President Hoover established the private house as a national goal to promote American long-term economic growth. Since then, federal policies and programs — including mortgage loans, income-tax deductions, the GI Bill, and the interstate-highway systems — have weathered the Depression and the wars, inflation and recession, to make the middle-class single-family house the largest housing subsidy our nation has ever offered.

So far, the results are impressive. According to U.S. Census statistics, in 1940, 44 percent of Americans owned a house. By 1950, that percentage had risen to 55. By 1998, 64 percent of Americans were homeowners. *Architecture* magazine estimates 100 million houses were built in the U.S. during the 20th century.

This big business continues to accelerate. Nearly one-third of the existing housing stock has been built in the last 25 years. *Architecture* magazine reports that more than 10,000 American houses change hands each day. And the National Association of Home Builders predicts that between 1.3 and 1.5 million units of new housing will be needed annually through the year 2010.

The Smartest Kitchen Ever — Almost Cooks and Cleans by Itself!!!

How many times have you read that headline? Unbelievably, it still makes covers, as it has for nearly a century. In fact, the shelter-magazine industry pre-dates our national housing policy. Beginning in 1895, *The Ladies' Home Journal* regularly published "model house plans" by architects, including several by Frank Lloyd Wright, and offered general information on decoration, domesticity, and "good taste." By 1919, the *Journal*'s circulation reached two million. Theodore Roosevelt reportedly said of Edward Bok, the *Journal*'s editor, "Bok is the only man I ever heard of who changed, for the better, the architecture of an entire nation, and he did it so quickly and yet so effectively that we didn't know it was begun before it was finished."

The shelter-magazine industry grew markedly at the close of WWI as companies shifted from wartime production to new consumer markets for domestic appliances and automobiles; during the same period, modern advertising was born. Historian Dolores Hayden relates these two trends, arguing that purchases for the home became the key to business success for these post-war companies. Even the earliest advertisers suggested that a home must provide more than shelter; it had to be equipped with garage, play room, washer, vacuum cleaner, carpet. Hayden argues that books such as the 1929 *Selling Mrs. Consumer* instructed business and government leaders in the use of advertising to manipulate American women into buying more household goods and desiring home ownership. Young married couples were also prime targets; *Selling Mrs. Consumer* advised that "'there is a direct and vital business interest in the subject of young love and marriage.'" Would Martha Stewart disagree?





The message today's magazines promote has changed remarkably little. As Mr. Bailey tells his son George in *It's a Wonderful Life*, "It's in the race for a man to want his own roof, and walls and fireplace." Thanks to this enduring (and unrelenting) message, supported by national policy, the well-equipped private house has become synonymous with the American Dream.

You're not just building a house...
You're building your dream.

Embrace Your Space;
Create the Home
You've Always Wanted!

Add the touches only you can add to make your house your home!

Our homes not only shelter us; they also speak reams about us — or so we are led to believe. Americans believe in the possibility of reinvention, of rising beyond one's heritage to strike out for a better life. The house and all its furnishings embody that progress. The house is the place to give the next generation all that we didn't have, be it a backyard, family room, media center, jacuzzi…. The dream house is the spatial representation of American hopes for the good life.

Yet ironically, most of our houses are "production houses," mass-produced for cheap construction and broad market appeal. There's not much that is inventive or unusual about most individual American dwellings. Enter the shelter magazines once again. These magazines offer the possibility of personalization.

Our society, after all, is based on individual freedoms and individual rights, not on the collective. Thus our architectural heritage is reflected in our individual domestic — not public — buildings. The private American house is our national architecture.

We know that architects design housing for the very rich and the very poor, but not for the bulk of Americans. For the middle class, the magazines serve as the architectural experts, giving technical advice, suggesting options, offering alternatives, advising on latest trends. The shelter magazines offer opportunity where none could be imagined before.

This architectural expertise is remarkably accessible and uniquely appropriate to our nation of equal opportunity. Maybe the fact that our housing is a mass-produced product, and that all its parts and accessories are for sale, is not a bad thing. After all, it's been this way since Sears and Montgomery Ward sold mail-order house kits in the 1800s. Americans today can pick out their dream house at the local supermarket. Along with their gallon of milk.

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches architecture at Smith College and writes the "Covering the Issues" column for *ArchitectureBoston*.

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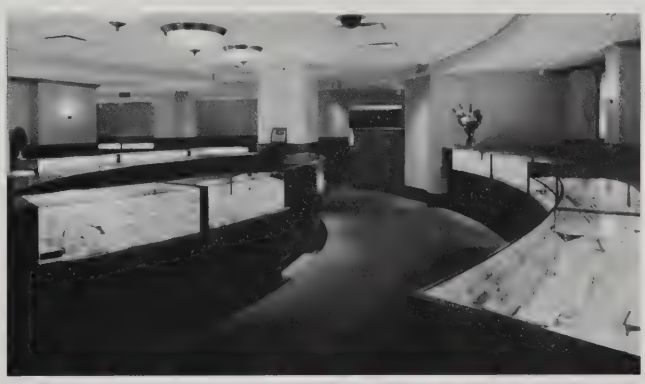
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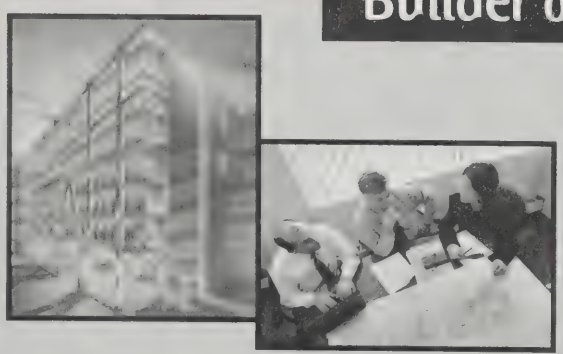
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Lofty Ideals:
Artists' Housing at 300 Summer Street

by Bob Kramer

I remember the thrill of moving into my first studio in the Fort Point Channel area of South Boston in the '80s. Not only was it a place to set up my tripod, but it was also a place filled with other artists like myself.

In many ways, we were naïve to think that the powers-that-be would let us occupy prime real estate forever. The great political winds were already whirling down the streets with their intent of pushing us out to make way for higher-paying corporate tenants. Yes, I was dislodged from my studio space and set adrift like so many other artists. I decided to bolt from the city and let others make their stand.

Years later, I find myself in Fort Point Channel again. This time I am photographing the artists at 300 Summer Street who stuck it out and made this place their home. Artists have long lived in the Fort Point Channel area, some living illegally in their lofts/studios. This building, owned and developed by an artists' co-operative, may soon be the last remnant of what was a thriving community.

I have never understood why a city like Boston doesn't respect the idea of an artists district — a place where artists work, live, and create. How drab a city can be with its tall buildings filled only with commerce!

And how wonderful it would be to have an area of the city filled with galleries with work created by those who actually live and work there. Is it too late for Fort Point Channel to be that stronghold for artists? ■■■



photos © Bob Kramer

Rob Reeps
painter

Bob Kramer is an architectural photographer in Boston.



Clark Quinn
photographer



Ben Freeman
artist



Dorothea Van Camp
artist

Jeffrey Heyne AIA
architect/painter



Jesseca Ferguson
artist (pinhole photographer)

Mark Pevsner
composer

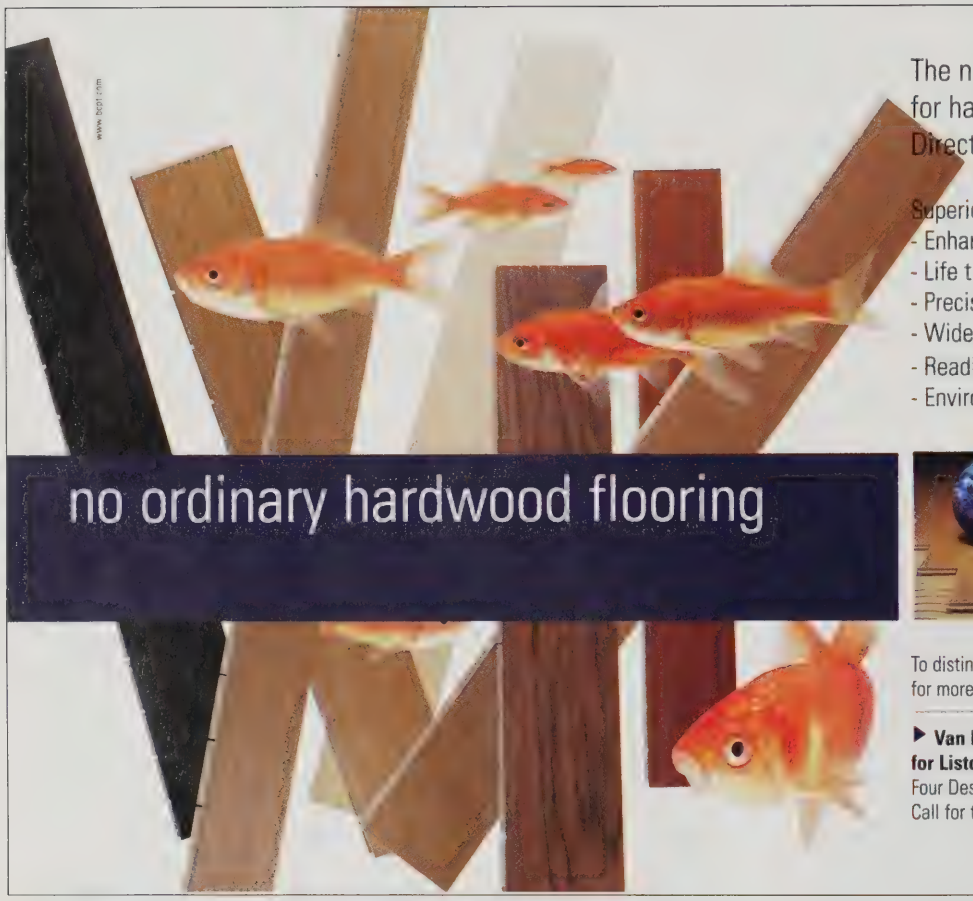


Christine Vaillancourt
painter



Mario Kon
artist

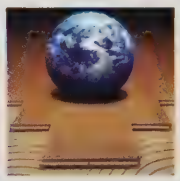
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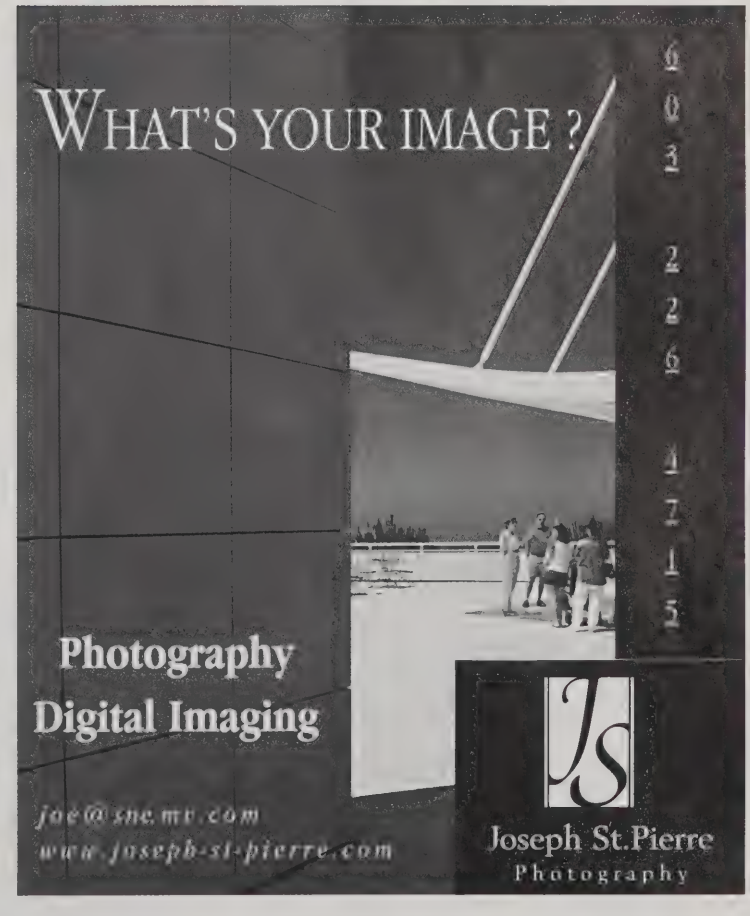
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It's Not Your Father's Trailer:

From the Mobile Home to Manufactured Housing

by Carol Burns AIA



Quick...What is one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. housing market, comprising 25 percent of new houses? (Hint: It's not McMansions.)

What is the only type of housing that is built in conformance with a federal building code that pre-empts state and local codes?

What is one of the least expensive, most easily financed, and technically innovative forms of housing available today?

The answer: Manufactured housing. You used to know it as the "mobile home."

Because of the familiarity of trailer parks and highway convoys of mobile homes, people might think that they know all about manufactured housing. But manufactured housing has evolved — and continues to change — in response to complex processes of regulation, production, and supply that have shaped this house type, largely without public awareness. Today, American manufactured housing dominates the global market for factory-built structures. The manufactured-home industry has contributed to the growth and expansion of industrialized housing (which includes modular housing) by producing a complete, unsubsidized house characterized by economy and by innovative techniques and materials. With its identifiable physical, cultural, and sociological characteristics, manufactured housing is undeniably significant, affecting people, communities, and settlements.

Quick-Change Evolution

The history of the "chassis-based house" is remarkable for its rapid change within a short time. Physical transformation, in association with changes in use and meaning, spun off a succession of entities with different names. The "travel trailer" emerged in the mid-1920s and its production continued until around 1940; the era of the "house trailer" spanned from 1940 until 1953; the "mobile home" period lasted from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s; the current period began in the mid-1970s when the mobile home officially became "manufactured housing." Each name change signified an effort to create a new image and public perception of the chassis-based house.

The "travel trailer" originated in the recreational-vehicle industry. Through the 1930s, travel trailers were viewed as recreational housing for households with mobile lifestyles and temporary housing needs and they were, indeed, highly mobile. Travel-trailer manufacturers introduced a variety of designs offering alternative appearances in order to relate this invention to accepted forms from the past as well as to popular images of the future.

During World War II, the rapid development of war industries spawned dispersion and mobility of the labor force. An immediate need for housing resulted, and the travel-trailer house satisfied it with a combination of mobility, affordability, and availability. Many units were used as permanent homes in single installations or in trailer parks, even as the units themselves remained potentially mobile.

Housing shortages after World War II increased the use of such homes as year-round residences. A newly renamed entity, the "house trailer," provided shelter that was both immediate and within economic reach of many. Families could move these units following employment or whimsy, keeping wheels, axles, and hitches in place for easy transport. Recognizing, however, that the interest in mobile housing was increasingly an issue of economy rather than mobility, the industry redirected its focus toward developing and marketing this industrialized housing type in competition with other forms of factory-built housing. This shift signaled the beginning of the process by which the potential mobility of the structure became evermore incidental in value.

The "mobile home" emerged as a distinct entity in the mid-1950s with the first production of a 10-foot-wide unit. Too big to pull behind the family automobile, the mobile home soon attained lengths in excess of 30 feet. With a growing demand for longer and wider units, the industry produced an array of size and material variations for what remained a basic rectilinear unit set on





Above:
Airstream designer, Wally Byam
First produced in 1935, with few body changes to this day

Top of page:
Manufactured Housing Institute demonstration project, Washington, DC
Susan Maxman Architects

a steel travel chassis. Long, extra-long, doublewide, multilevel, foldout, pop-up, expandable, and multisection units enabled physical configurations more akin to those of conventional housing. Similarly, pitched roof forms, interior and exterior finishes typical of conventional construction, and site designs were adapted to make the mobile home more house-like and less vehicular. The shift from the house trailer to the mobile home involved a change in attitude as well as in use: The industry began to produce dwellings that happened to be mobile rather than trailers that could also serve as dwellings.

Soon, manufacturers were faced with the choice to remain in the travel-trailer business, to produce larger mobile homes exclusively, or to manufacture both products, essentially for different markets. In 1963, the two industries formally split, with travel-trailer manufacturers identifying themselves as the recreational-vehicle industry. By the mid-1970s, one-fifth of all new houses were mobile homes, primarily for people seeking affordable starter housing.

Having emerged from the recreational-vehicle industry, chassis-based houses were initially subject to little or no regulation for construction or installation. Manufacturers were either small firms turning out a few units a month or large automobile companies producing mobile homes on the side. As mobile homes became a permanent housing choice for more people, concerns about public health and safety arose. Governmental recognition of the importance of mobile homes in satisfying demand for affordable housing led to federal legislation regulating their construction. In 1974, Congress passed what is now known as the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act, which directed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop national building standards and a federal oversight program for the construction of manufactured homes. In June 1976, the Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards became law. Known as the "HUD Code," it distinguishes manufactured housing from other forms of housing. Its passage marked the end of mobile-home production.

Public Reception, Then and Now

Historically, manufactured housing has suffered disfavor from the public, local and central government, housing finance institutions, and the design profession (though a few architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright and Paul Rudolph, have worked with the concept on occasion). Even today, it continues to create controversy. Limitations of structural forms by transportation restrictions and the banal use of basic construction materials to maintain low market prices have led to the perception that it is less than "real" housing. The current stock of chassis-based houses still includes older, lower-quality units that were built prior to the adoption of the HUD code, propagating the perception that manufactured houses are unsafe "tornado magnets."

Compared to mobile homes of the past, however, manufactured-housing units built today vary widely in appearance and can be indistinguishable from conventional "site-built" housing. Homes produced today are comparable to site-built homes in terms of maintenance, wind safety, fire safety, and thermal efficiency. Manufactured housing satisfies the preferences of many consumers who want to own a single-family, detached house with a private yard. As such, it appeals to diverse household types, including young first-time homebuyers, older homeowners and retirees, and others seeking an affordable "starter home" as the first step on the ladder of home ownership. Affordability is perhaps its most important feature; households often have few other low-cost housing options. Recognized as a realistic option by both those who build them and those who buy them, manufactured houses continue to become evermore indistinguishable from conventional dwellings. ■■■

Carol Burns AIA is a principal of Taylor & Burns Architects in Boston and is a housing fellow of the Joint Center for Housing at Harvard University. Research and student work from her studio on manufactured housing at the Harvard Graduate School of Design may be found at: www.gsd.harvard.edu/~gsd1300a/



Left:
Oriental Masonic Gardens
New Haven, Connecticut
designer, Paul Rudolph
circa 1971



Above:
Pacemaker
bilevel, 1950



Left:
Committee Trailer
FHA/War Production
Board (war housing)
original cost, $750
1942

Above:
Tenwide
Marshfield Homes
designer, Elmer Frey
1954

photos: collection of Carol Burns AIA

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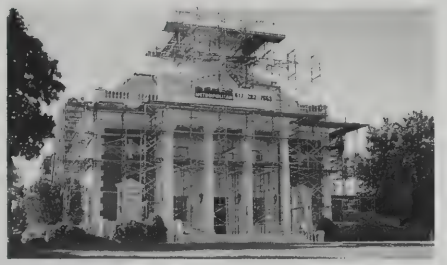
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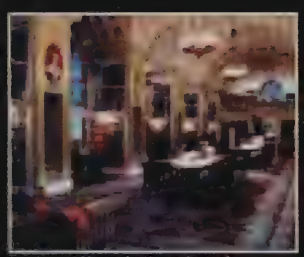
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photo courtesy James Moore

Letter from Florida

Coming of Age in the Sunshine State

by James A. Moore, Ph.D., AIA



Celebration, Florida

James A. Moore, Ph.D, AIA, is the community-design principal at HDR, Inc., an architecture, engineering and planning firm, and an associate professor at the University of South Florida.

The excruciating closeness of Florida's presidential election highlights the paradoxical nature of the Sunshine State. While some view Florida as the poster child for what is wrong with post-war planning and development, others see us as a bellwether for the tough issues that will eventually affect the entire nation.

A demographer I know likes to contrast Florida with Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, he notes, 82 percent of the population is from Pennsylvania. In Florida, by comparison, 75 percent of the population is from somewhere else. The stability of the Quaker State makes it easy to achieve consensus and relatively difficult to innovate. In Florida, consensus is a rare commodity, but change is second nature.

Increasingly, however, a consensus is emerging, if only as a reaction to the status quo. People feel that things today are not as good as they could be, and that they may get worse before they get better. Fear is a great motivator; many people, ranging from private citizens to business and political leaders, worry that current problems may keep us from properly addressing our future.

The dominant industries in Florida are still related to construction, tourism, and retirement. All three industries are temperamental, and all three are parasitic, eating into the very essence of what makes Florida attractive in the first place. Construction and related industries contribute massively to the state's economy. Conversely, the product of these industries — sprawl — is the number one concern of most residents today. For every economic development official who welcomes another office park, retail center, or condo complex, increasing numbers of people are saying, "Enough is enough."

Tourism, too, is a mixed blessing. Our 50 million visitors each year spend their money here. Much of it, however, goes to poorly-paid service workers. Meanwhile, the tourists use up valuable infrastructure, perpetuate sprawl (particularly near Orlando and the beaches), and are notoriously fickle. Economic downturns or bad publicity quickly prove the fragility of a tourism-based economy.

Gone, too, is the easy assumption that the majority of each year's retirees will come to Florida for its combination of golf, low prices, and nice weather. Analyses suggest that the state's lock on the elderly may be slipping, particularly among the more educated and affluent. As early as 1994, *The Wall Street Journal* noted a shift in retirement venues away from Florida. Current surveys pick locations as diverse as Idaho, Washington, North Carolina, and Wisconsin as prime retirement destinations.

Additional studies track the changing nature of retirement itself. Part of the change is the apparent unwillingness of the baby-boom generation to actually slow down. Over half of the boomers surveyed plan to continue working, at least part time, past the age of 65. These people will alter the nature of old age. Healthier and wealthier than the generations that made Florida a haven, the boomers are experience junkies, with a taste for variety and high quality. Those locations that can provide these attributes will succeed. Those that can't, won't.

Economic changes also portend a different future. Recently, the Urban Land Institute convened a panel to discuss the implications of a digital society. Coming from diverse disciplines and locales, the panelists seemed united in one sentiment: The future belongs to communities that can provide a

high quality of life. By this, they did not mean low prices and sunshine. Instead, they favored intensity of experience; a range of social, cultural, and aesthetic choice; and a diverse population. Specifically, they were discussing the resurgence of America's great urban areas, particularly pre-automobile cities such as New York, Boston, and Chicago, or later cities that mimic earlier models, such as Austin, Pittsburgh, Portland, and San Francisco.

One panelist addressed high-tech industries, the holy grail of development officials everywhere. He pointed out that it's no longer an issue of state and local politicians offering financial incentives. Today's corporations recognize that people can and increasingly will choose to work where they want to live, instead of the other way around. The important factors today include urban lifestyles, diversity of choice, variety of experiences, and an educated populace. It's not just universities, he said. How good are the grade schools, the museums, and the neighborhoods?

This puts Florida in a curious position. The archetypal post-war suburbia, Florida has few traditional urban centers to revitalize. It has almost no mass transit, only a handful of truly historical neighborhoods, and a weak educational system. Our roads are overcrowded, and much of the ecology is marred, if not spoiled. Our constitution prohibits a personal income tax, so we paradoxically rely on growth to pay for things — a Faustian bargain at best.

What Florida does have, however, is a tradition of transformation. Increasingly, people recognize that if they want change, they need to start at home. Perhaps because so much of the state is defined by sprawl, Florida is also the home of the greatest number and variety of "traditional neighborhood developments" (TNDs, as they are known to planners and developers), including two of the best-recognized — Seaside and Celebration. "Smart Growth" initiatives abound, and everywhere, citizens are inserting themselves into the community planning process, if only to gain a say in their future. The state that is notable for its generally low-quality built environment is also the state with the most aggressive programs for purchasing environmental lands to protect them from development.

Vestigial urban centers are being nurtured back to health. A recent *New York Times* article highlighted Florida's rediscovery of downtown living by noting that major residential projects are under way "... in once-seedy downtowns of Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa and St. Petersburg, and they are so popular among would-be downtowners that most are spoken for long before they are even built." Older suburbs are also being transformed, becoming at once more diverse and more focused — in short, more urban. Failed malls throughout the state are being converted into mixed-use centers, many including housing. The governor has unleashed a program challenging the schools to improve and has also charged a blue-ribbon panel with rectifying the weaknesses in our growth-management legislation.

Lost in the uproar over our inability to pick a president is that we were solidly in favor of amending the state constitution to mandate a high-speed inter-urban rail system, to be under construction by the end of 2003 — further proof that people understand that auto-oriented suburban growth is not sustainable.

Recently, I was asked to discuss ways of corralling the state's burgeoning sprawl. Reviewing best practices from around the country, I distilled the material into ten recommended approaches. Ironically, all ten can already be found, to some degree, within Florida today.

The recommendation that stirred the most debate was the call for regional government, something that citizens (who want less government) and local jurisdictions (which don't want to relinquish power) both resist. But regional governance itself is not the goal; regional cooperation is, and recent events indicate that we may already understand the benefits this brings.

A November press conference in Tampa unveiled the state's bid to win the 2012 Olympic Games. While Tampa is the official host city, the mayors of the seven largest cities in Florida were all in attendance. Their sentiment was that this effort was not just about Tampa, or even about Tampa and Orlando (which will also host many events). Rather, the bid is a vision for the "Olympic Corridor," running from St. Petersburg to Daytona Beach. By extension, it is a vision for the entire state.

The mayors understand this. More and more citizens understand this. As a state, we are still young, still transient, and still growing. We will undoubtedly continue to argue over the best approach to the future, but the consensus seems clear that it won't be business as usual.



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photo: Peter Vandenwalker

A Roof of One's Own

Charlotte Golar Richie talks with Leland Cott FAIA



Charlotte Golar Richie is the chief of housing and director of the Department of Neighborhood Development for the city of Boston. Prior to her appointment by Mayor Menino, she served as a state representative representing Boston's Dorchester and Roxbury neighborhoods, and served as House chair of the Joint Committee on Housing and Urban Development in the Massachusetts legislature. She was previously a newspaper and television reporter.



Leland Cott FAIA is a principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is a design critic at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he teaches seminars and studios on housing and urban design. He is a past president of the BSA.

Cott: As the director of the Department of Neighborhood Development, you currently administer $200 million in city, state, and federal funds. You also oversee 300 employees. Taken together, this makes you a very powerful person. But more important, it makes you the largest developer of housing in the city of Boston.

Golar Richie: We have a profound effect on the quality of life of people in the city. So this role is a privilege, but it's also a chance to do some creative things. It's a chance to look at issues like design, issues like affordability. Are we doing all we can to make housing affordable to, let's say, the hard-pressed middle class? They're the ones who often get caught in the middle.

Cott: It's really the vast groups of people in between the very wealthy and the very poor, who have the most difficulty finding housing.

Golar Richie: Yes. I would say that there's general public support for housing for the homeless. That doesn't mean that people want that homeless shelter located next door to where they live, but they understand that society has a role to play in supporting people who are the poorest of the poor. We've seen approximately a 30 percent increase in the number of homeless families. We're getting the sense that it's easier to get a job than it is to get housing in the city.

But Mayor Menino has said from the beginning that he wanted to support middle-income families. A family of four, let's say, with two people earning $40,000 apiece. That doesn't make them wealthy. I think most of us embrace the notion of a city that is diverse economically. We want to see that working families are able to live here and raise their children here.

Cott: It makes you wonder what the future of Boston will be if it continues to have the reputation of being a difficult place in which to find housing. Your mission statement says that this department is committed to making Boston "the most livable city in the nation by working with communities to build strong neighborhoods through the strategic investment of public resources." The word "strategic" jumped out at me. How do you see deploying public resources to maximize the number of units you can develop?

Golar Richie: We want to use this money wisely and responsibly. The mayor recently unveiled a housing strategy for the city of Boston. We talk about it in terms of the five P's: production, preservation, public housing, partners, and performance.

Cott: The sixth P is design, but we'll talk about that later.

Golar Richie: It took enormous energy and cooperation among various city departments, including this department, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston Housing Authority, and the Inspectional Services Department. But this is a pragmatic and achievable approach to our housing challenges. On the production side, we picked a number — and that wasn't easy — 7,500 units over three years, which we broke down based on what we felt we could get in terms of funding and the need in the city. We in this department felt we could, over three years, aggressively create 2,100 units of housing for low- and moderate-income people. The Housing Authority felt they could return 1,100 vacant public units back to productive use. That would leave a balance of 4,300 units, which we'll allow the private market to bring in. So, that's the production piece.

In terms of preservation, we have boarded-up units that we need to bring back online. We've got so-called "expiring use" units — affordable units created through federal and state programs that are at risk of going market-rate if we don't intervene. We have seniors out there who are homeowners with vacant apartments in their houses because they can't afford to renovate those units. They worry about contractors coming in, worry about not being able to handle that. And we want to help them. Those are just some examples. We set as a goal 10,000 units over three years that we will plan to preserve, in addition to the 7,500 new units. In three years we will have no vacant public-housing units in the city of Boston.

Cott: That's aggressive.

Golar Richie: The mayor put $30 million toward this housing strategy, going to bricks and mortar. It also helps us leverage dollars, so what we have is, in effect, a $2 billion program, if everything goes as planned. But we need to make sure that our partners — the federal government, state government, and the private sector — join us in this effort.

Facing page and below: Orchard Park housing Dudley Square, Boston

Client: Trinity Financial/ Madison Park CDC for Boston Housing Authority

Rehabilitation and new construction

Domenech Hicks & Krockmalnic Architects



photo: Peter Vanderwarker

And then the last thing is performance. People come up with grand plans for addressing all sorts of societal ills. But then they have a press conference, and everybody congratulates one another, and then they go their merry way, and years later you say, Whatever happened to that? This is different — we are putting ourselves out there. There is a list of goals, and you can check them off.

Cott: I want to get back to the issue of design and your sense of the role of design in the production of housing. I think we too often get hung up about the number of units we're producing — how quickly we're doing it, what the costs are — and we tend to forget that once they're built, people actually live in them. If they're not designed well, there's a problem.

Golar Richie: Design is critical to our success — it's critical to our ability to go to a community and encourage them to accept an affordable-housing development. A bad-looking development will always get pointed to and will become the reason not to do affordable housing. It's something that we are very mindful of.

Cott: Has the topic come up in your weekly meetings with the mayor?

Golar Richie: No. I wouldn't say it comes up weekly, but it comes up with my staff. You can bet that if we support a bad-looking structure, that will come up. You hear less about people saying, "That really looked good." But you will hear when it doesn't look right. There is an ongoing tension between the desire for first-rate design and the ramifications on cost.



photo: Peter Vanderwarker

1640 Washington Street
Boston

Housing for homeless elders; adaptive reuse and new construction

Bruner/Cott & Associates

Cott: The assumption being that good design costs more?

Golar Richie: Yes. Right now, to create a unit of housing here in the city, we're finding that the cost is over $200,000 a unit.

Cott: That's a phenomenal number. Not so long ago, it was $65,000 or $70,000.

Golar Richie: So if you say to me, it would really look better to have some beautiful oak floors instead of linoleum or carpet, I'm with you. I like the oak.

Cott: But you also have to weigh it against how many units that eliminates.

Golar Richie: Right. We know that the public wants to see good-looking design. I think people have an aesthetic sense, even if they don't have a trained eye. If it's too nice, it looks too extravagant. People will question whether that was the best use of funds. But I think in the main, if you have some good, clean, crisp design with good lines, structures that respect and blend with the existing landscape, those are the kinds of things that get applauded. Housing that doesn't look like it's for "those people." Housing that doesn't discriminate.

Cott: Or stigmatize.

Golar Richie: That's right. I think it's safe to say that, as a society, we've moved away from the notion of warehousing poor people in multi-level developments.

Cott: We're also more interested in dispersing affordable housing units throughout the community, so the low-income units are not as identifiable.

Golar Richie: Absolutely. And that goes for supportive housing, too. I'd much rather see a program for homeless people, for example, that is integrated throughout the city and not just a home for homeless people.

Cott: How did you became interested in housing issues?

Golar Richie: Maybe it's hereditary. Both my parents worked in housing in New York, and in fact my grandmother and my father lived in public housing. My dad eventually worked his way through law school. He was the chairman of the New York City Housing Authority for many years under the Lindsay administration. My mother was an elementary-school teacher. After staying home with us kids, she went back to work and landed a job as a manager in New York's housing preservation department.

Cott: Was housing discussed around the dining table at night?

Golar Richie: Not quite the way I'm discussing it at my house. We probably talked more about politics.

ott: How do you think you have matured in your utlook or in your expectations about housing? ou're a seasoned politician, but you probably arted out with a lot of idealism.

olar Richie: I think idealism gets worn down a ttle bit. I was a Peace Corps volunteer — that's a al example of idealism. I'm on the side of believing activist government. I think that we can do a hole lot to improve the lives of people — so I'm ill idealistic in that way. But my feet are firmly oted in the ground — I know it takes work.

ott: Do you feel you can raise the bar on what's eing done for housing and how we're doing ? Are there any innovative things that are being oked at?

olar Richie: That's our responsibility. The mayor looking for new ideas. One example is housing r grand-families — grandparents who are raising eir children's children. The first development of at kind in the nation, as I understand it, is in orchester. And it has been hugely successful. We've een working with groups to support housing r families raising foster children. And I'm working ith the Boston Society of Architects — we are ying to develop a plan for what we call "Main treets housing."

ott: And what is that?

olar Richie: Our neighborhood Main Streets are ned with one-level businesses, and we could build ousing above those businesses.

ott: That's why I keep coming back to design. In ommunities that support design innovation, sparks egin to fly and wonderful things happen in terms f how people feel about housing. We can't think of eople in housing as a homogeneous group — they ome from different backgrounds and different mily structures. Design can accommodate those ifferences. For example, you can imagine housing r single parents with children, in which there ould be common recreation facilities, perhaps a ommon kitchen for an occasional communal meal.

olar Richie: I will say that one group that we ave focused on is the disabled community. And we ave looked at ways of making our housing more daptable.

ott: Can you see the political processes around ousing as a means to make the city more livable for ll of its citizens? Boston still has a reputation of eing a somewhat segregated community, especially n terms of its neighborhoods.

Golar Richie: I would argue that Boston's probably not a whole lot different in that regard from other major cities in the U.S. But we vigorously uphold our fair-housing laws. Yes, we know that there are a lot of people who want to remain in the neighborhoods where they grew up, but we also know there are a lot of people who come to the city, or who have lived in the city, and would like to try living somewhere else. And that should be supported. I welcome interaction with different kinds of people, but I know everybody's not like that. Some people just want to be with their own kind. But my job is not necessarily to preserve that kind of thing. It's to make sure this is an open society.

As this country of ours gets more accessible to a lot of people, we all interact more. Your children interact with mine and with the neighbors'. So it is incumbent upon us, if we want to be a safe, productive, prosperous society, to ensure that everybody has a chance to succeed. And that means you've got to have a good place to live. Housing is not a privilege. It's a right. I like the idea of reinventing public housing. ■■■



photo: Peter Vandenwaker

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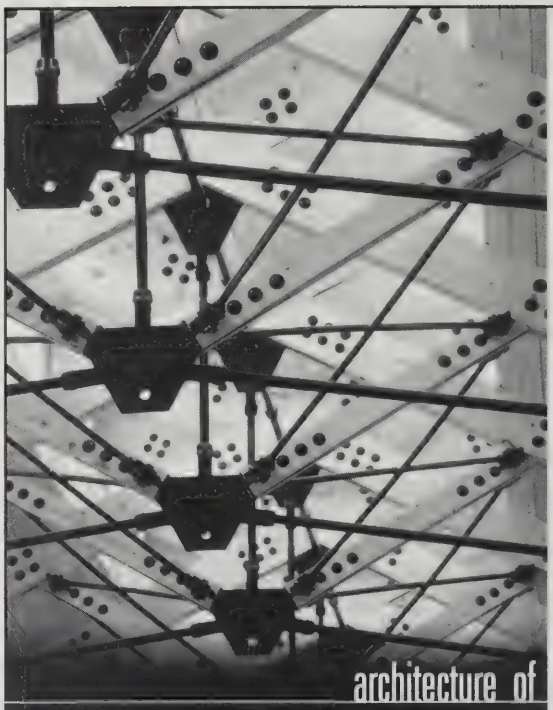
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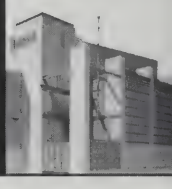
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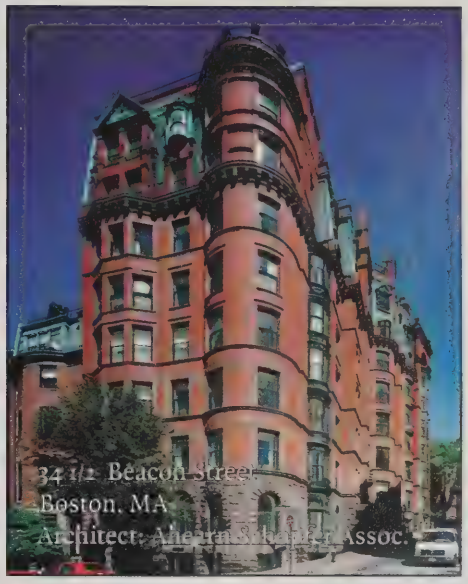
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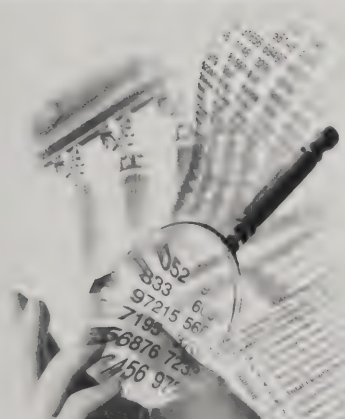




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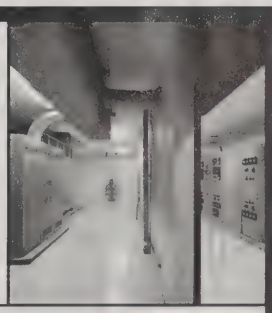
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Two View

Politicians, policymakers, and planners have all recently offered their solutions to this region's affordable-housing crisis. *ArchitectureBoston* asked two people who actually build housing: What do *you* need?

by Philip Giffee



Philip Giffee has been the Executive Director of NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) for 13 years. NOAH is a multi-service community development corporation in East Boston.

The affordable housing crisis in this region is searing and deep. Housing experts project that we will need 78,000 new units in the next five years. A *laissez-faire*, the-market-will-handle-it approach may produce only 36,000 — leaving thousands of low- and moderate-income persons and families hanging like chads, while thousands of educated workers, critical to our information-age economy, are forced to seek their fortune elsewhere. If we are indeed a responsible, enlightened community, as we like to think, then we must take aggressive action throughout the region, not just in Boston, in order to have a meaningful impact.

If programs, regulations, and money are tools, then commitment to resolving the crisis is the toolbox. These tools can be put to work now:

- The state has already established a clear goal: Ten percent of the housing stock in every city and town must qualify as "affordable." Older generations have benefited greatly from government-supported programs and should not squelch development of multi-bedroom dwellings because subsequent tax increases may be necessary to fund more children's education. The state can enforce its goal by withholding "local aid" funding from communities that show no progress.

- Municipalities control land. Each must commit to a set-aside for affordability and avoid excessive demands for open-space reservations. Massachusetts' new Community Preservation Act can help towns address both interests. In former industrial areas, we can use "brownfields" funds to clean up contaminated sites for new housing.

- Municipalities could offer density bonuses and tax credits for mixed-use developments that provide mixed-income housing and commercial uses that meet economic development goals while reducing sprawl.

- Over 2,600 publicly supported units in this region have been "stripped" from the public domain because of expiring Section 8 agreements and conversions to mixed-income developments. Another 10,000 are at risk of conversion to higher-income dwellings in order to maximize owners' profit. We must commit to funding the preservation of *every* public housing unit and *every* expiring-use property.

- Many rooming houses have been converted to more "productive" uses, but we haven't replaced their original function. The region needs single-room-occupancy (SRO) housing for the working poor, who need permanent housing more than temporary shelters.

- Interest rates substantially affect affordability for homebuyers. The region's corporate giants — including the mutual fund and financial-services industries — should contribute matching funds to community-development financial institutions (CDFIs) to help underwrite lower-cost loans.

- We must regulate predatory mortgage companies that raid seniors, immigrants, and unsophisticated borrowers through excessive interest rates and needless foreclosures. We should support financial literacy training and credit counseling programs to curtail these unethical "equity stripping" practices.

- The governor has rightly claimed that excessive regulation drives up the cost of housing. A coalition of housing organizations and professional associations such as the BSA should recommend ways that public, private and quasi-public financial intermediaries can reduce "oversight" and regulation.

- Money matters. Tax rollback measures, such as the $1.2 billion cut fiercely championed by Massachusetts Governor Cellucci and President Bush's $1.3 trillion cut, threaten government's ability to fund affordable housing. A moral commitment to fund housing based on today's undeniable housing crises should supersede the political capital accumulated by elected officials.

Can we house all residents of Greater Boston? Yes — *if we're committed.* Are further studies needed? No. Nic Retsinas of Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies has said, "We don't need more conferences to build housing. We know how to build housing." The cost ($1.5 billion) would be less than depressing the Central Artery ($14 billion) or cleaning the harbor ($5 billion). If a basic human and economic need as housing is unmet, we should question the wisdom, foresight and values of this community.

Affordable Housing



by Lisa Alberghini

sa Alberghini is the director the Boston office of The ommunity Builders (TCB). CB is a private non-profit eveloper which has helped evelop more than 15,000 its of affordable and mixed-come housing.

r more information on CB: www.tcbinc.org.

e reports and studies ted may be found at: ww.chapa.org.

Within the span of eight weeks in the fall of 2000, Cardinal Bernard Law of the Archdiocese of Boston released a report identifying "a new paradigm for housing in Greater Boston," Massachusetts Governor Paul Cellucci issued two significant studies on increasing housing production, and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino identified a five-part strategy for tackling the affordable housing problem with renewed commitment and vigor. When you stop to think about it, this collection of work by local leaders in such a short period of time is extraordinary. Who in the industry can recall a time when more attention has been paid to the challenge of providing affordable housing?

So, what more could we possibly need? *Action.*

We need clear and decisive action. Coordination of efforts and resources. Speedy application processes and funding decisions. Cooperation rather than competition for attention among political and program leaders. A commitment by private developers to invest in all segments of the housing industry, not just the most profitable. And leadership from private-sector businesses and financial institutions, universities and unions, to match that of our public sector leaders. The affordable-housing crisis is not putting itself on hold waiting for reams of regulations to be prepared, for one political faction to position itself more favorably than another, or for the private sector to find perfect solutions that do not interfere with profits. We cannot wait any longer. It's time to get moving.

Cardinal Law, Governor Cellucci, and Mayor Menino have all exhibited real leadership in promoting affordable housing, even though they have clear differences in approach, emphasis, and required resources. We can focus on those differences or we can challenge each other to see the shared commitment, to pay attention to the true need that has brought the industry together over the past year, and to insist upon moving forward with solutions.

How do we do that? We get the state's new Housing Trust Fund up and running quickly. We support the mayor's efforts to expend the $13 million recently approved by the City Council for new affordable-housing projects. We work with the state to implement changes that are called for in its studies. We establish productive incentives for suburban communities, clearly the farthest behind the curve on this front, to muster the courage and capacity to provide more affordable housing. We insist that approvals needed to move projects along are being granted (responsibly, of course). And we ask more of private developers — when only 40 unsubsidized affordable housing units were added to the stock in Boston last year, during a time of unprecedented profits, the development community itself must acknowledge culpability in a system near the breaking point.

Fortunately, almost all of our leaders are paying attention. They are initiating programs, filing legislation, and preparing regulations. Let's recognize their efforts, and understand that every detail of each new thought may not always be completely worked out. In a time of crisis, we can't wait for the 100-percent solution. Let's use our judgment and balance the need for programmatic perfection, political positioning, and profits with the needs of families. Let's allow our programs to evolve as we learn more, and continue to work hard for more resources, but not let either of those things hold us up from taking action immediately.

We have made remarkable progress in the past year. Our leaders must continue to be unrelenting in their commitment and conviction, and we must all hold ourselves to a strict standard of performance over politics. We can't let this opportunity slip away or dissolve into a meaningless memory of the year we almost made a difference. ■■■



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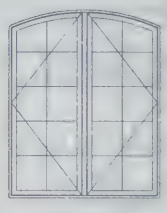
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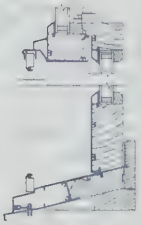
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Covering the Issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

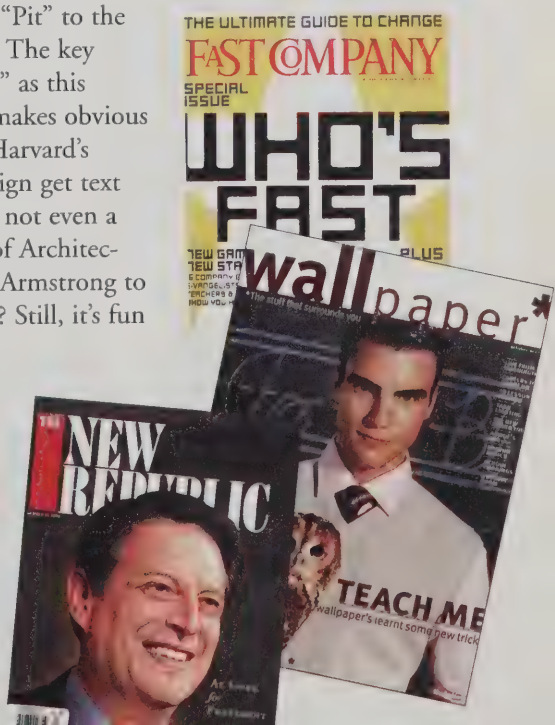


Design matters... "Good design can be the difference between success and failure." This holds true not only for buildings, but for magazine articles, too. "Super Structures" boasts the headline in the November 6, 2000 *Business-Week*. "Making Good Design Pay Off," claims the October 2000 *Architectural Record*. Both articles independently escribe the winners of the 4th annual joint *BusinessWeek/ rchitectural Record Awards*, sponsored by the AIA in njunction with McGraw-Hill, publisher of both magazines. hese are the same awards given to the same projects, though ne would never guess that by the wildly different ways they're ublished in these two magazines. The story is the story. By the umbers: *Record*'s 20-page awards section includes a variety of sual material and text. On average, each winning project is resented through 4.4 project photos; a client/owner photo; a rawing; a list of key facts, explanatory paragraphs describing he challenge," "the solution," "the benefits," and "key players"; nd finally, jury comments. *BusinessWeek* offers a 15-page ecial section. On average, there are 1.9 project photos, no rawings, a list of key facts, and text that is sharply and uriously abridged. *Record*'s clear, comprehensive treatment of ese projects leaves the reader understanding both the rchitecture and why it was good for business. *BusinessWeek*'s mited, jumbled presentation leaves the reader still searching for ne buildings. These awards, and the collaboration between the esign and business worlds, deserve praise. But the collaboration eeds to carry through all the way to the published, public essage. Now it just highlights the cultural divide.

rban affairs...OK, maybe it's a little weird to review a review. ut Nathan Glazer is always worth talking about. In *The New epublic*, (October 30, 2000), he calls recent books by Joseph ykwert and Janet L. Abu-Lugod "necessary examples of how ne city can be intelligently loved." The review is a necessary xample of how the city can be intelligently discussed.

ural wisdom... Sam Mockbee and his students seem to ccomplish what many only dream about. In Mockbee's "Rural tudio" — a semester "abroad" program at Auburn University — students spend a semester in Hale County, creating and constructing innovative, low-cost houses for residents of one of America's poorest counties. The dream: Low cost does not mean low-quality design; innovation does not mean high-ego, high-minded Modernism. *Fast Company* (November 2000) profiles Mockbee and his students. Made primarily from natural or found materials, each house is given away, no strings attached. This is far from a handout: Students gain hands-on construction training and down-to-earth, real-life experience as they work with "regular" people and materials and learn to make the theoretical real. The ground rule: Every house must be one that students would live in themselves. While using architecture to improve lives, the semester changes students' attitudes toward poverty. By every measure, this astounding project should be celebrated. Could this happen elsewhere? Could this happen here?

Home turf... It's always odd to read about one's own place in print, especially when that print is the *über*-hip *Wallpaper** (October 2000). In "Mass Education," Stephen Armstrong and this British mag visit our Cambridge to check out the famous scene and schools at either ends of Mass. Ave. Armstrong's observations are surprisingly well-detailed and wide-ranging, touching on topics from the extreme pressures students face to nightspots like the Hong Kong and the Middle East, from the renovation of Baker House to the collapse of rent control, from the skateboard kids at the Out-of-Town News "Pit" to the drinking deaths at MIT. The key word there is "touching," as this article only skims, and makes obvious admissions. Why does Harvard's Graduate School of Design get text and photos, but there is not even a mention of the School of Architecture at MIT? Who sent Armstrong to the Hong Kong anyway? Still, it's fun to see familiar scenes through the *Wallpaper** lens. ■■■



Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA teaches architecture at Smith College.

Books

A Decent Place to Live: From Columbia Point to Harbor Point — A Community History

by Jane Roessner

Northeastern University Press, 2000

reviewed by
Anne Gelbspan

A Decent Place to Live describes the history of the collapse of the public-housing development at Columbia Point and its eventual transformation into the mixed-income community known today as Harbor Point. It tells the fascinating history of how public housing evolved from the original intention in the 1950s of serving as temporary housing for the working poor into housing of the last resort for the poorest families.

In the beginning, Columbia Point transcended racism through shared values and active involvement and volunteer work by the residents. But because of local political pressures, problem families were disproportionately assigned to Columbia Point. Eventually, operating costs were no longer covered by the insufficient rents and, as a result, the management deteriorated and maintenance was deferred. By the mid-1970s, this model community had become a symbol of failure. In this complex of over 1400 units, only 350 families remained, living in fear, in a dreaded wasteland of vandalized apartments, drugs, and crime.

The revitalization was driven by the fierce determination of a small group of residents, almost all women, and the vision of the developer Corcoran Jennison. The key to success was the 50/50 partnership between the residents and the private developer, which restored strong management, instituted resident screening, and integrated social support services and programs. The redesign by Joan Goody FAIA took advantage of the spectacular ocean views.

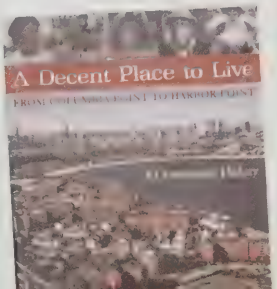
There are still some problems at Harbor Point. The isolation of the site is hard to overcome. Businesses have failed and collaboration with the other institutions on the peninsula has not been completely successful. Some low-income residents resent the conflicting lifestyles of the "market" residents. Others are dissatisfied with the inadequacy of programs, especially for young people. While the low-income residents tend to stay long-term, the average "market" tenant, often a student, is more likely to move on after a year.

Harbor Point's success inspired HUD to redevelop its housing stock under the HOPE VI program into privately-managed, mixed-income communities. Emulating Harbor Point, the HOPE VI program now integrates social services and programs for residents. In Boston, that model is also guiding the rebirth of older public housing developments such as Orchard Gardens and Mission Main. The program is controversial because it fails to replace the low-income units lost to new market-rate units. Nationally, only about 60 percent of "lost" units are replaced, due to social planning goals and lack of federal funds. However, as the book points out, the cost to the federal government of the home-owner's tax deduction vastly exceeds funds designated for subsidized housing.

Amply illustrated, *A Decent Place to Live* offers a useful blueprint for planners and policy makers. But its stories are what make this book so compelling — the moving stories of personal struggle set against a background of class and racial conflict. Together they remind us of a forgotten piece of Boston's history. ■■■

Anne Gelbspan is a project manager at the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, where she develops affordable housing in the Boston area.

(This book is available from the BSA: bsa@architects.org).





Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House

by Eric Hodgins
Illustrated by Willaim Steig

Academy Chicago Publishers, 1999

reviewed by
Julianna Waggoner

The title of this book is misleading: *Mr. Blandings* is building his dream house, but he's not alone in this fiasco (and did you expect it would be anything but a fiasco?). The Mrs. appears demurely but solidly in the second paragraph, and together they endure the purchase of property, the design of their dream house, and subsequent disasters that skew their best-laid plans.

Observations about early 20th-century gender bias aside (*Mr. Blandings* was written in 1946 and reprinted in 1999), this story is still apt today. Anyone who has designed or built a habitable structure will relish the book's humor and cringe at its accuracy. Of *course* the toilets show up several months before the house is even built. Of *course* said toilets spend the interim time languishing under trees in a nearby field, looking "unspeakably vulgar" — nothing less bizarre has ever happened on most jobsites.

Interior designers will enjoy Mrs. Blandings' instructions to the painter, which deteriorate from "the color is to be a soft green, not as bluish as a robin's egg" to "please match the piece of thread which I have wrapped in the little piece of tissue paper enclosed. *Be careful not to lose it.*"

The author's wry, witty style is reminiscent of Thurber. Urban and urbane, it is full of delightfully polished phrases: "...there was no way on earth to cut a $31,000 house down to a $21,000 house any more than there was a way of making marmosets out of a zebra by trimming down and rearranging the zebra."

Note, please, the lovely sum of $31,000 for one's dream house! *Mr. Blandings* is a nicely compact illustration of how much has changed in 55 years...and how much has not. The astounding financial figures that shock the Blandings make us chuckle at how cheap every darned thing used to be. But the descriptions of the flighty, purely intellectual architect the Blandings first hire (did someone say "fresh out of MIT"?) and his later replacement, a more practical professional, seem oh-so relevant today.

The reader is also treated to the frighteningly canny appraisals of the Blandings by the supposedly ignorant residents of the town in which they have purchased their property. For it appears that the Blandings have scooped up the choicest piece of property on top of the highest hill in the county — just like arrogant rich city folk. We cannot help but be sympathetic to the Blandings' plight as inveterate Manhattanites who dream of country bliss, even if we do feel dutiful Smart-Growth outrage at their urban audacity.

Mr. Blandings dreams of becoming the king of his very own castle and ends up being the uneasy ruler of his very own Big Dig. Who in our profession couldn't relate? ■■■

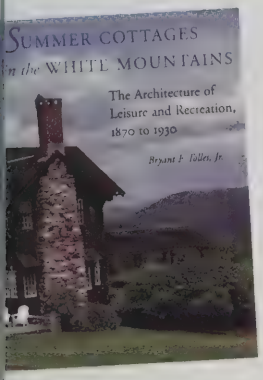
Julianna Waggoner is the marketing director for Dietz & Company Architects in Springfield, Massachusetts. She performs standup comedy, and comedy improvisation with the troupe The Villa Jidiots. She lives in Haydenville, Massachusetts (a blissful country setting).

ummer Cottages in the Vhite Mountains: he Architecture of eisure and Relaxation, 870 to 1930

Bryant F. Tolles Jr.

niversity Press New England, 2000

viewed by nda R. Weld AIA



his is the story of deeply felt notions and enduring passion. t against the stunning ackground of the Presidential ange, it is the on-going saga of chitecture in New Hampshire.

ill waters do run deep. In spite his unambiguous title, academic proach, and objective narrative ne, Bryant Tolles reveals to an udience willing to read between e lines the enduring passion of a holar for his subject, the evocative ower of an image, and our own notional response to the symbolic ualities of architecture.

rom the "Summit House" on Mt. Washington to Miss Annie hayer's carriage house, it seems as Tolles has recorded, researched, nd analyzed every piece of chitecture of significance in lew Hampshire. Beginning with *lew Hampshire Architecture: An llustrated Guide* (1979), followed y *The Grand Resort Hotels f the White Mountains* (1998), olles is developing a significant ody of work that documents lew Hampshire's previously bscure architectural heritage. He kes us from the resort hotels f the post-Civil War period to the rivate seasonal retreats of the 930s in his new and noteworthy volume, *Summer Cottages in the White Mountains.*

"Summer cottages" are not as easily defined as Tolles would have us believe when he asserts that there is "near unanimity as to the meaning of the term." Certainly the Gothic Revival cottages of A. J. Downing present a form and scale at odds with the summer "cottages" of the Gilded Age in Newport. Summer-cottage architecture of the Victorian and Edwardian age was rich with expressive possibilities. Architectural styles changed as often as the proper Victorian lady changed her frock. Eclecticism and eccentricity were indulged. "Castle in the Clouds," for example, is a mannerist romp through the style books by a wealthy Bostonian who fired three architects before finishing the project himself. While such an extravagent summer cottage would hardly be noticed in some resort communities, it is, in Moultonborough, New Hampshire, an example of self-indulgence to an unusual degree. New Hampshire's summer cottages in general tend to be more expansive than impressive, and more informal than overwhelming. They do not constitute a type; rather, they present a showcase for the stylistic movements popular at the turn of the century.

In spite of his title, Tolles does not elaborate on this theme. Instead, with a zeal for documentation and detail, Tolles tells the stories of the owners, designers, and builders of nearly 100 summer cottages in the White Mountains. The result is a scholarly guide, copiously annotated, with a complete appendix of architects, commissions, and clients, and an extensive bibliography. Generously illustrated with historic photographs, drawings, maps, and the author's own evocative photos, Tolles' new volume is a valuable addition to the documentation of New Hampshire's historic architecture.

Linda R. Weld AIA lives and practices in Milton, Massachusetts, and frequents "Avoca," a summer cottage in the White Mountains.

The Not So Big House

Taunton Press, 1998

Creating the Not So Big House

Taunton Press, 2000

by Sarah Susanka AIA

reviewed by James McCown

Everybody complains about McMansions, but nobody ever does anything about them. Enter Sarah Susanka, author of *The Not So Big House* and its recently released "case study" sequel, *Creating the Not So Big House*. These are refreshing, jargon-free books that lay out the author's contention that, in this age of affluence, people often build houses that are vastly larger than what they actually need, and that the resulting rambling, soulless abodes work against the notions of family and community.

Some tenets of the *Not So Big House* credo: Formal, separate living and dining rooms are a vestige of Victorian propriety and end up wasted; the commercial homebuilders' focus on raw square footage yields big, awkwardly proportioned rooms that are cold and uninviting; and — can we get a hallelujah on this one? — much of residential design is driven not by human need but by the conventional resale wisdom of real estate agents. The author's voice is gentle, straightforward, and aimed at the non-architect: Think in three dimensions; think proportion; think sequence and ritual; think rich details. Further, she manages to criticize the suburban *status quo* without descending into the almost reflexive contempt many elite architects have for the American *haute bourgeoisie.*

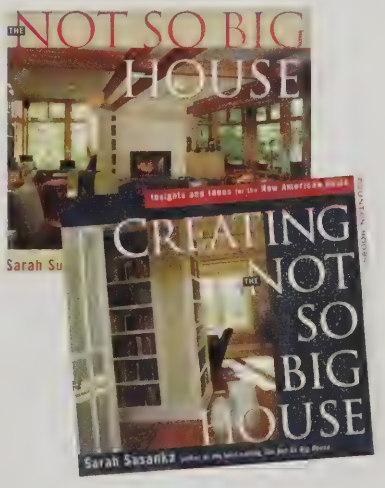
Susanka often cites Frank Lloyd Wright's dicta that variation in ceiling heights and the use of nooks and crannies lend a sense of differentiation and coziness to otherwise unbroken spaces. (My own favorite detail, the window seat, is aptly called an "embrace from the house.") She also contends that built-in storage can make up a lot for lost raw square footage, but the cost — ouch! Has she priced custom cabinetry lately? *Caveat emptor.*

The books are beautifully illustrated and laid out simply and clearly, with plans and sections accompanying each example. But in the *Creating* sequel, Susanka presents too many examples in *Architectural Digest*-like settings — the coast of Maine, the Napa Valley — instead of in the typical suburban subdivision whose residents could most benefit from her advice.

We hear a lot about today's workplaces being "in step with our casual lifestyle." Similarly, these books present the concept of the private residence as freed from any notion of formality whatsoever. But this begs a question. For generations, formal living and dining rooms have served important ritualistic roles in American life, even if not in daily use. As appealing as Susanka's thesis is, and as well executed as her books are, what are we getting rid of here?

Hmm — I'll have to curl up in my favorite window seat and think about this one.

James McCown is director of communications at Moshe Safdie and Associates Architects in Somerville, Massachusetts.





SEDIA

Pavillion Chair
Mies van der Rohe
1929

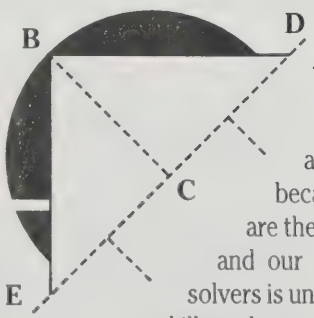
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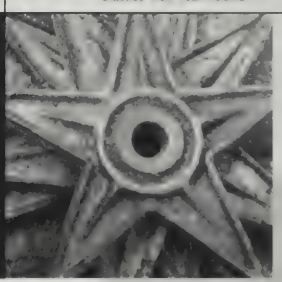


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Web sites of note

Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb

www.uic.edu/~pbhales/Levittown.html

A fascinating, thorough documentation of the suburb that has attained almost mythic status. Photographs show both the original development and its transformation.

Citizens Housing and Planning Association

www.chapa.org

This respected non-profit organization is the "only statewide group which represents all interests in the housing field" in Massachusetts. As you might expect, it produces *the* go-to Web site. Be sure to check the "public policy" and "what's new" areas.

Shelter, Inc.

www.shelterinc.org

A worthy and effective organization that combats homelessness. Click on the "homelessness" button for some startling facts about the hurdles facing homeless and near-homeless families in the Boston area. Artists and designers can help: Contribute work for the May 31 "Images of Home" art auction.

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Research Department

www.hudusers.org

A federal agency that's actually user-friendly! Download reports and studies such as the "American Housing Survey," search a bibliographic database, sign up for listservs, and explore Web links.

B4UBuild

www.B4UBuild.com

A cheerful, non-threatening site that tries to demystify the homebuilding process for consumers. But professionals will find it helpful, too — there's an amazing compendium of information and materials resources.

Outhouses of America

www.jldr.com/ohindex.shtml

Everyone needs a hobby…a light-hearted tour of surviving outhouse structures by an outhouse fanatic. Makes you wonder what common present-day structures will someday be considered quaintly obsolete. The three-car garage, maybe?

Manufactured Housing Institute

www.mfghome.org

Did you know the governor of Arkansas is living in a triple-wide? Sure, it's temporary, just while the official mansion is being renovated, but it shows you how far the manufactured housing industry has come (*see page 34*). "Mobile homes" aren't just shelter anymore — they're a *lifestyle*.

CIA-Boston

www.ciaboston.org

No, no, not that CIA. This is Christmas in April, which every April organizes teams of volunteers who rehabilitate houses of low-income homeowners. The Boston program celebrates its 10th anniversary this spring.

We're always looking for intriguing Web sites, however enigmatic the connection to architecture. Send your candidates to: epadjen@architects.org

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The Zimmerman House



photo courtesy of the Currier Gallery of Art

Whenever I lust after a designer house, I think back to a visit to Tom and Lucilla Marvel when I was given the task of arranging the flowers. Lucilla, who is my very oldest friend, brought out an Aalto vase and I messed about, drooping posies prettily into its plump folds. Lucilla gave a whoop of laughter, and grabbing the flowers, she hauled them upright. "Remember," she said, "Tom designed this house. This is an Architect's House."

With that playful rebuke sitting like a parrot on my shoulder, I recently visited another Architect's House, one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonians. This one was commissioned by Isadore and Lucille Zimmerman of Manchester, New Hampshire, and after both had died (and were interred in the garden), it went to the Currier Gallery as a house museum. I had seen another Usonian-as-museum near Washington, DC, and found it confining. Would the Zimmerman be different? And who were the Zimmermans? For one attraction of visiting house museums is poking around in the lives of the people who lived there.

My first question was, How tall were they?

As the world knows, Usonians were a housing manifesto, Wright's answer for people of modest means. He eventually designed several dozen, some grander than others, but all in some way reflecting his own diminutive stature. The Zimmerman Usonian is rather like a submarine hull, revealing nothing till you are inside. And while Wright asserted the Usonian layout was truly American, I was interested that his design for the Zimmermans has a "carriage entrance" and a "garden front" like an English Stately Home; and the route from the carport to the front door mimics the progression from farm yard to portico in a Palladian villa. What is truly different is the compression.

Lucille Zimmerman, according to the expert Currier guides, was about five-seven, tall for the time, and her husband was a tad shorter. He was a successful urologist and pianist and she, his office manager and cellist. They had come to hate their big Colonial Revival for all it said about ultra-conservative New England. And so in June 1949, Dr. Zimmerman wrote to Wright asking for "a home that would be an integrated expression of our personal way of life rather than a coldly efficient building." When the couple told Wright that on Tuesdays they invited friends over to play chamber music, he designed a communal music stand as stately as a lectern in a medieval library.

And so there was music on the afternoon of my visit. It was a low November day, tawny oak leaves scything down on the red-tile roof and a pianist playing Liszt at his most melancholy as we sat on little stools. The music followed, now Bach and Rachmaninoff, as we toured the two bedrooms (master and guest), for the brick-and-wood interior made a powerful acoustic. I could imagine Mozart keeping Lucille company in the galley kitchen.

My second question was, What did they sit on? The answer was, where Wright wanted them to sit. Lucille, we were told, prided herself on good posture and said she would be content with a stool at the dining table. No, said Wright, you must have a chair, and it must be well-padded. For dinner parties, the couple's little table was combined with other tables to seat a multitude along a very long banquette in the living room. Made comfy by the cushioned backs and seats, guests could lounge and talk. But purely as sofa, the banquette did strike me as constrained as a farmhouse's side porch with just enough room for a row of rockers facing forward. And where did the Zimmermans sit to read or chat? In bed, under the stout bookshelf above? In the two little armchairs, which, tellingly, are not by Wright? Nature does bring release, brought indoors through glass walls, and there were the patio months when the Zimmermans were further cosseted by Wright's garden. With its Great Lawn and woodsy Ramble, it is Central Park in miniature.

There was a lot to admire at the Zimmerman house. Much in little, and enormous elegance of detail and finish — though the box bed frame barked my shin, and I know those bricks will never mellow. I would love to like this house but the truth is, like many Americans of the early 21st century, I am no longer mannerly enough for a Usonian.

Margo Miller was a writer-reporter for *The Boston Globe* for 37 years.

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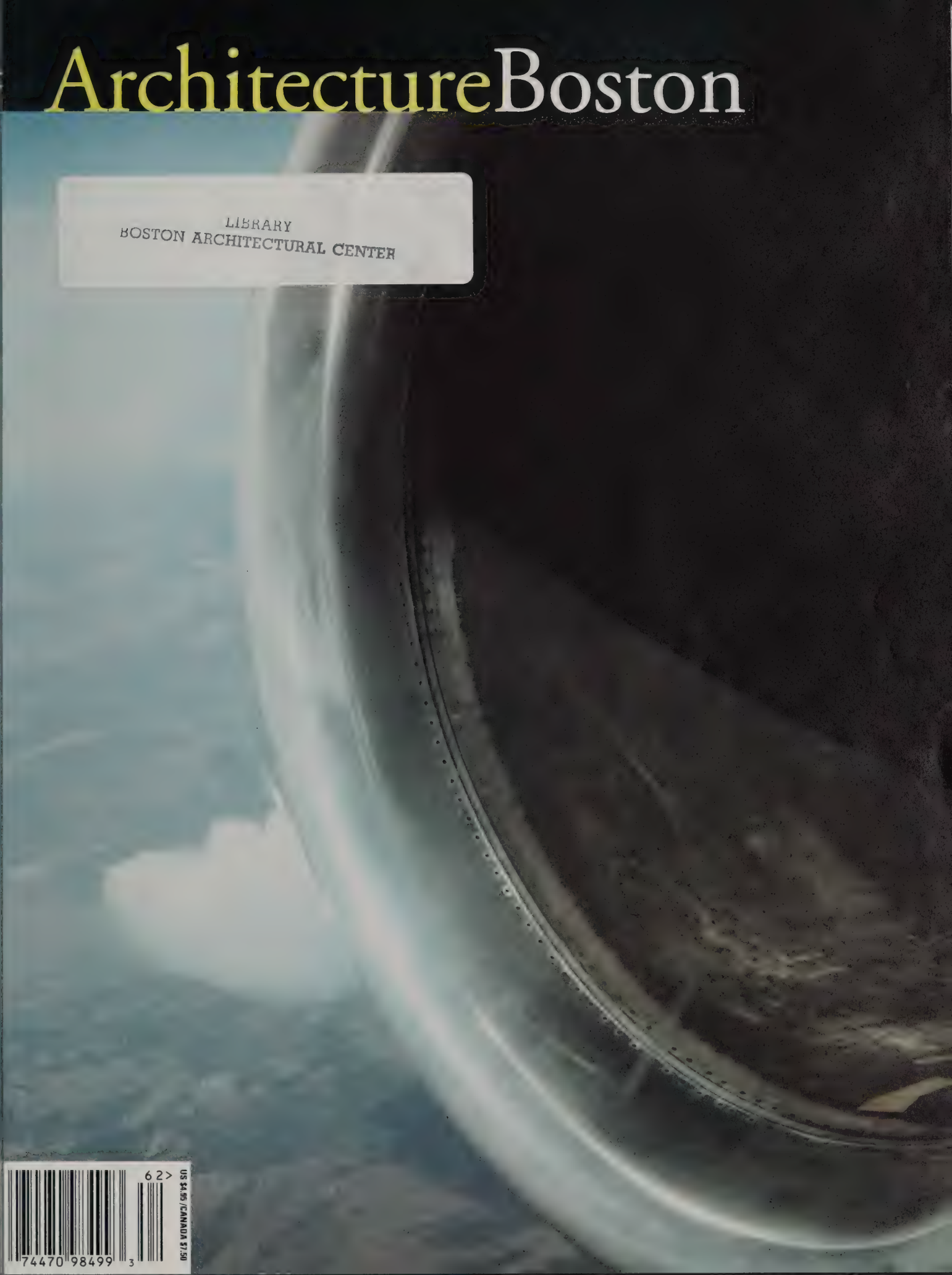
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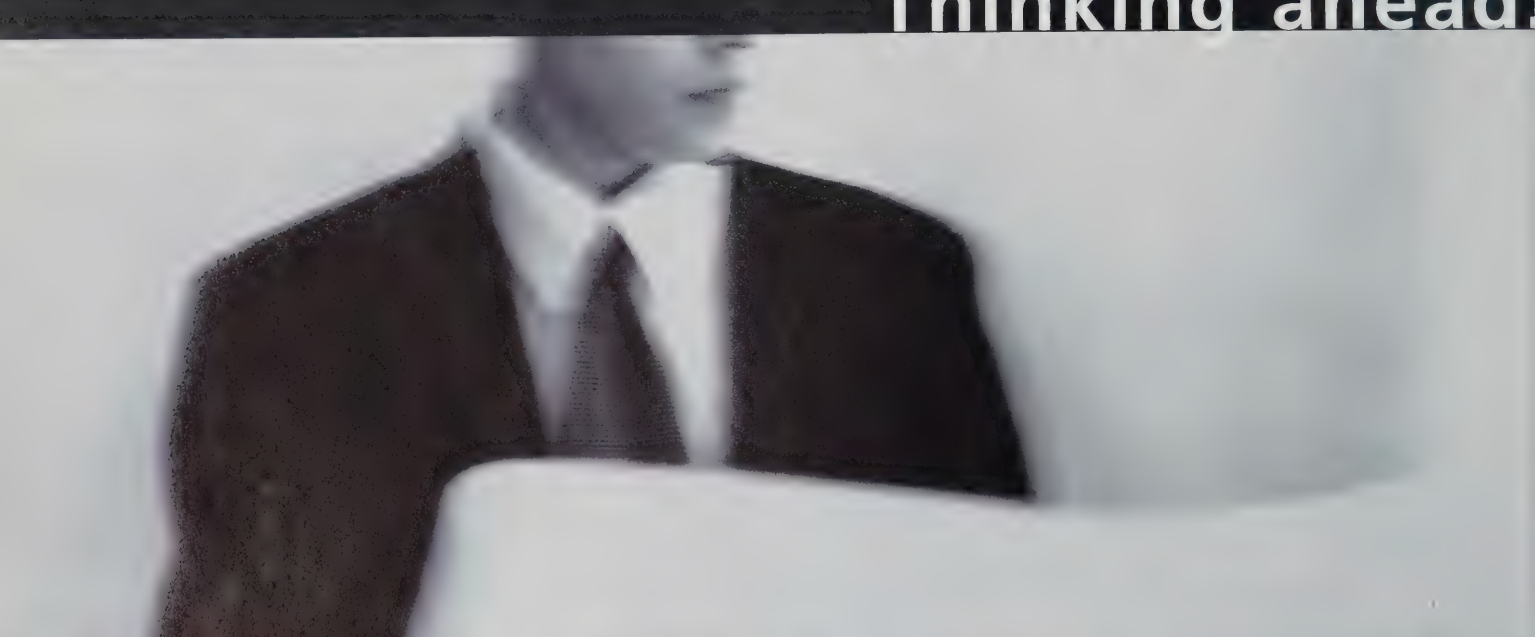
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With all the hoopla about "globalization," you'd think it was a new idea. The fact is, humans have always been a free-ranging species. Trading, exploring, warring, or fleeing, we have roamed the world, planting new ideas and civilizations, like cultural Johnny Appleseeds.

Yet we know instinctively that something different is going on today. The exchange of ideas and goods once involved an enormous investment of time and great physical risk. Today we trade ideas and goods by clicking on a "send" button. The great risk to modern global traders is not death by drowning or battlefield wounds, but incapacitation by carpal-tunnel syndrome.

With this issue of *ArchitectureBoston*, we examine some of the effects of the globalization of architecture. Importing and exporting designs and designers, the profession has embarked on a period of enormous fluidity as architects cross regions and borders in the global marketplace.

But we still do not understand fully what this will mean — to architecture and to the evolution of cultural identity. "Signature" buildings are in vogue around the world. "Destination architecture" is now high concept — see the March 2001 "design" issue of *Condé Nast Traveler*. And why not? The Taj Mahal and the Pyramids have retained their hot-property status for centuries.

And yet there is something unsettling in all this. Of course we all bemoan the world's growing homogeneity — we crave the delight and astonishment of the exotic; we celebrate the richness of human societies. But even more disturbing is the nagging suspicion that we are trading architectural trinkets.

The 18th-century sea captains of Salem once brought back strange and curious objects from their voyages to the Pacific Northwest, Japan, China, India, Sumatra, and Oceania — which they put on exhibit in glass cases that were the basis for today's Peabody Essex Museum. We similarly are collecting architectural curios — Jean Nouvel's proposed Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Frank Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao, Hans Hollein's office building in Harvard Square — and isolating them from cultural context, placing them under the curatorial care of architecture critics and educators.

Today, sophisticated museum curators are reinterpreting yesterday's souvenirs, providing cultural context, using them to broaden our understanding of social change. Similarly, there are architects — some of whom are represented in this issue — who are acutely sensitive to the social implications of their work, who are eager to embrace intellectual free-trade. These are the pioneers of the next phase of globalization, which will respond not to the market for novelties, but to the market for ideas.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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Courtesy Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc.

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Editor
Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Managing Editor
Nancy Jenner

Editorial Assistant
Kate Kelly

Art Director
Judy Kohn

Contributing photographers:
Bob Kramer
Steve Rosenthal
Peter Vanderwarker

Advertising
Richard Vendola
BSA Sales Office
1645 Falmouth Rd #1A
Centerville, MA 02632
Tel: 800-996-3863
Fax: 508-790-4750
rvendola@capecod.net

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Letters

Kudos for the issue on "Shelter." While the articles reflect a range of opinions about the causes of and solutions for the affordable-housing crisis, I do not believe there is one approach that will uniformly address every context. What is clear, however, is that affordability is not purely a consideration of cost. Affordability is the relationship between the production cost and the incomes of the families or individuals who want to rent or purchase housing. Politically, economically, culturally, I believe we all understand intuitively or factually that the growth of the state is very much at risk without a conscious approach to affordable-housing development.

At this point, affordable-housing production cannot work without direct or indirect subsidies. Whether these supports come in the form of land write-downs, zoning concessions for use or density, credit enhancements, grants, rental assistance through project-based Section 8 or voucher programs, this patchwork of financing is a fundamental obstacle. Unless there is a critical change in the equation, you'd better be smart or have the money to hire somebody smart to assemble your financing package.

The New Testament teaches us that the poor will always be among us. Historically, and I believe somewhat shamefully, we have culturally envisioned the poor as being the "other." The experience can be somewhat different, however, where towns or cities sponsor local housing committees. They can attract affordable-housing developers using the local vision of what is appropriate for the individual community. This may be particularly true when we see that the poor are employees of towns who cannot afford to live where they work. Or when the poor are our own sons and daughters who cannot afford to live near their parents.

Diane Georgopulos AIA
Architect, Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency
Vice Chair, AIA Housing Committee

You've done it again! Another great issue of *ArchitectureBoston* ("Shelter" Spring 2001). I'm so glad to see the attention paid to housing. Although housing of all kinds fills up most of the landscape and affects every one of us in a personal way, it has had very little attention from architects for a long time.

ArchitectureBoston has started some good conversation. It really is the best architectural magazine going. Instead of glossy pages to show architectural acrobatics, it deals with the real world and how we can relate to it through design. I look forward to the next issue.

Sarah P. Harkness FAIA
Lexington, Massachusetts

In his essay "Lofty Ideals" (Spring 2001), Bob Kramer asks, "Is it too late for Fort Point Channel to be that stronghold for artists?" In 30 years of planning and designing artists' buildings there, I have seen the threats to the artist community rise and recede like the tide, though it feels as though each rise gets higher and more threatening. Each rise of threat corresponds to the crest of real-estate values, while in each recession we managed to secure some buildings for artists. The 300 Summer Street building featured in the essay was bought for about $10 per square foot before remodeling in the early '90s — after it had been valued at almost $60 per square foot a few years before at the height of the boom. Now, un-remodeled buildings in the area, if any were to be found, would sell for over $100 per square foot — which would make the studios affordable only to artists with hefty trust funds.

So what is there to do — pray for a whopping recession? It is either that, or find some substantive help from the rich and powerful of the neighborhood to make buildings available for artists' studios and to write down their cost.

Several businesses in the area have made enormous amounts of money during the last 10 years of the boom in financial services. They could adopt an artists' building and in return get some pride, positive publicity, and a lively neighborhood. The Convention Center Authority could realize that having a vital artists' community on its doorstep may be a significant attraction for its visitors.

Massport owns a great deal of property in the area and is developing a lot more. As a an agency invested in the attraction of the region, it could take some initiative and make a building available. The Fort Point Arts Community (FPAC) is actively trying to secure more buildings. FPAC has a proven track record in developing artists' spaces, but it needs help from its wealthier and more powerful neighbors to write down the initial cost of some structures. Traditionally, after amassing great wealth, businesses and institutions have become patrons of artists. This is a good time to revive this tradition at Fort Point.

The mayor and other city leaders have often spoken of the value of the arts community to Boston. After years of kind words, it is time to ratchet up the leadership and instigate a movement among the prosperous neighbors to ante up and ensure the arts community's survival.

Lajos Héder
Héder Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Luckily, more architects and builders are becoming interested in building environmentally friendly "green" houses. Consequently, there are recently built houses that deserve emulation. This spring, some of the best environmentally friendly houses received recognition as winners of the Northeast Green Building Awards. This competition was organized by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association and sponsored by the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust.

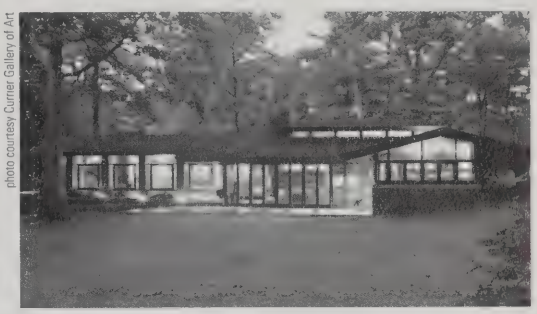
Interestingly, the winners in the residences category of the competition were all in Massachusetts. The Hickory Consortium's Erie-Ellington Homes in Boston won first prize. A new residence in Sunderland by Richard Morse, Architect won second prize. And a multi-family retrofit in South Easton by Yule Development Company received honorable mention. These projects, along with other award-winners, can be viewed at www.nesea.org.

Warren Leon, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Northeast Sustainable Energy Association
Greenfield, Massachusetts

I know that many hours of effort go into your marvelous journal. I am therefore hesitant in pointing out an error. The photograph printed of the Zimmerman house (Spring 2001, page 56) is backward. The actual living room is on the left; the bedroom is on the right.

Carter M. Reich AIA
Needham, Massachusetts

photo courtesy Currier Gallery of Art



Alas, errors do sometimes occur, despite — or because of — our many hours of effort. Here is the correct image of the Zimmerman house, with apologies to our readers and to the Currier Gallery of Art, owner of the house.
— Editor

I appreciated the focus on housing in the most recent issue of *ArchitectureBoston*. It was especially encouraging that the issue considered the important land-use issues connected to home construction, along with discussion of the aesthetics and economics of new homes. If we want to have a healthy, sustainable region that includes natural habitats for wild plants and animals, we need to find ways to continue to build new houses while preserving valuable land and avoiding mindless sprawl.

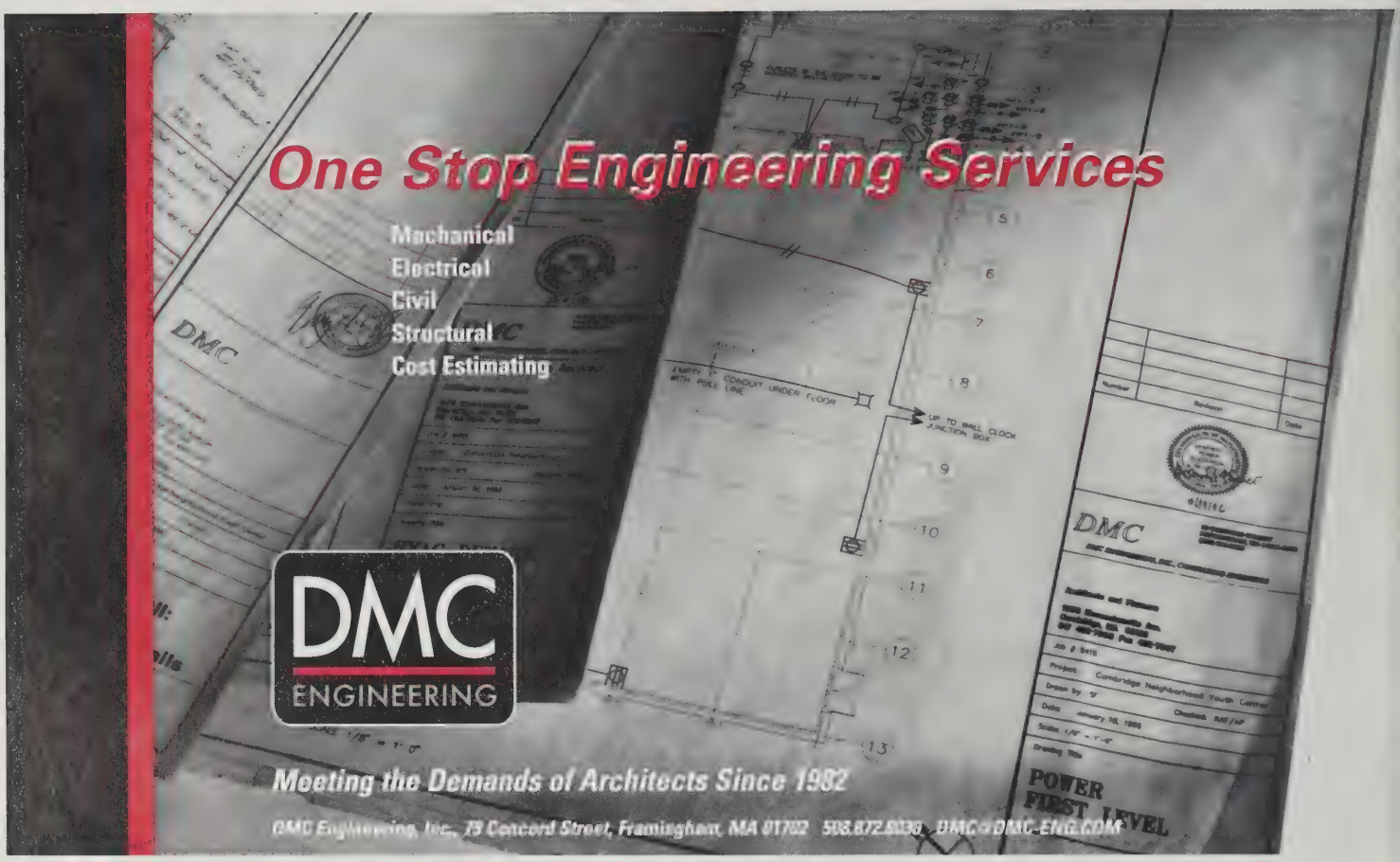
The magazine did not address a different aspect of housing that is equally important to sustainability, however. Depending upon a house's design and choice of materials, its environmental impacts can vary greatly. A house requires large quantities of energy and materials to build and operate, but the best produce many times less air pollution, water pollution, and greenhouse gases than the worst. Because houses are such large objects and last such a long time, their environmental impacts should always be considered up front.

Cost/Benefit/Awards: an anonymous perspective

In response to our special 2001 "Year in Review" issue, which featured the BSA 2001 award-winners, we received this insider's view of awards programs from the marketing director of a well-known Boston firm — whose identity we are pledged to conceal.

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Photography	Marketing Coordinator time spent negotiating with photographer, setting up shoot with client, setting dates in relation to weather, getting list of shots from Principal in Charge (PIC)/Project Manager (PM)	6	30	$180
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	FedEx or courier (because this is always last minute)			$10
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Preparation of submission	First draft of text by marketing department	2	30	$60
	Review and rewrite of text by PIC	1	75	$75
	Second draft of text and layout by marketing department	3	30	$90
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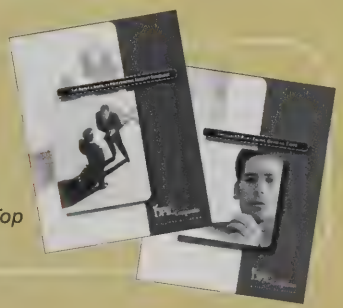
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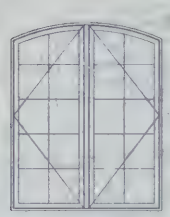
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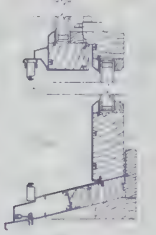


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Architects without Borders

Boston's architectural community is enriched by the presence of architects who have come here from other countries and made this city their home. Many are now engaged in international practices, which give them a unique perspective on the influences of globalization.



Lior Couriel is the principal of CACD-Couriel Architecture Construction and Development in Jerusalem, Israel, and a senior project manager at Gorman Richardson Architects in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. His work has included urban design, master planning, corporate and residential projects. He is maintaining his practice in Jerusalem.

John de Monchaux, Hon. BSA, is a professor of architecture and planning at MIT, where he served as dean of the school of architecture from 1981 to 1992. Originally from Australia, he later practiced in London. His work has since included projects around the world. From 1992 to 1996, he served as general manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, based in Geneva.

Antonio Di Mambro FAIA, is principal of Antonio Di Mambro + Associates, Inc. in Boston, where his work includes projects in Italy and Puerto Rico. He is originally from Italy.

Mozhan Khadem is the president of Boston Design Collaborative in Boston. His work has included projects in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Ecuador. He is originally from Iran.

Eduardo Lozano is a principal of Lozano Baskin Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His work has included projects in Argentina, Nicaragua, Armenia, and Germany. He is originally from Argentina.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is editor of *ArchitectureBoston.*

Monica Ponce de Leon is a principal of Office dA in Boston. Her work has included projects in China, Spain, Venezuela, and Venice. She is originally from Venezuela.

Kyu Sung Woo FAIA is a principal of Kyu Sung Woo Architect in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is originally from Korea, where he has worked on several projects.

Padjen: Globalization cuts across all aspects of our society — social, political, economic — so by looking at the issue in terms of architecture, we are adopting a very narrow lens. New regulatory and legal measures — such as international trade agreements and licensing reciprocity — are opening borders for architects. But changes in legal restrictions are usually driven by social forces. What are some of these social and cultural forces, and how are architects responding to them? How will these forces change the way we ultimately make places? And given the obvious political and economic strength of this country, as well as its apparent cultural hegemony, what is the evolving role of American architects in the new global culture?

de Monchaux: My sense is that there is much about architecture that allows us to assess it on its own terms — to determine whether it is distinctive, it is apt, it is environmentally sensitive — before it is characterized as American or Swiss or French or British. Having said that, I believe there are some themes that tend not to be as evident in American firms — I'm thinking of the British interest in technology, in the work of Norman Foster, for example. But the first perception is whether a decent, respectable architectural contribution has been made.

Padjen: What is the perception of American architects abroad?

Di Mambro: I think that professionals abroad most admire our ability to get large-scale projects conceived, organized, designed, and built. And the speed at which we get things done.

Ponce de Leon: What is interesting to me is how much of this perception might actually be a myth. We were in China recently and went on a tour of new large projects in Beijing. What is shocking is that the largest ones were actually done by Chinese companies that were using Americans and Europeans as fronts. Our hosts explained this to us very frankly. They said, "We are a Chinese company and all of our infrastructure is Chinese. We have invited these European architects to pretend that they are in charge of the project, but we are only using their name. We have invited this American architect and these Japanese architects to pretend that they are designers in the project,

Facing page:
Koc University
Istanbul, Turkey
Boston Design Collaborative

"We as architects have to understand our social role and the ways we can bring peace and harmony to the world. We have to do more than just import the latest fads and fashions."

Mozhan Khadem

but in fact they are only doing some interiors." The project is truly Chinese, but they need the pretense of having foreign participation as a marketing tool, as a means of selling it to the Chinese people. And you see the same thing in Venezuela. It's interesting because many Venezuelans think that asking an American architect to do a project will ensure that the building will sell faster, because it will be more fashionable. So they hire American companies, but then the American companies cannot deal with the local idiosyncrasies and cannot deal with the hurdle of local permitting processes. Then the Venezuelan developers have to hire Venezuelan architects to fix the mess that the American companies leave behind. So I question this image of efficiency.

Khadem: I think both points of view are correct. American firms are much more efficient, we are much more organized, we can get things done a lot faster — that is all true. But at the same time, although there is a culture here that says everybody is equal, underneath we believe we are first among equals. So it's very difficult for us to adapt to local ways of doing things and, consequently, that does create a lot of problems.

photo: Timothy Hursley



Whanki Museum Courtyard
Seoul, Korea
Kyu Sung Woo Architect

"If we build a new Disney World in Tokyo, that's not an issue of culture. It's an issue of building type. High-rises, airports, shopping centers — we have an accumulated knowledge that no other country can compete with, simply because we invented so much."

Kyu Sung Woo FAIA

But I think things have changed a little bit, that Americans are trying to adapt and to be sensitive. Western values and culture are at the core of much of what is going on politically in the world today. The whole Iranian revolution was a cultural revolution against the values of the West. The whole issue of terrorism will never be understood unless and until Washington understands it for what it is: a direct opposition to all the Western values that have been imposed upon these people since colonial times. Nobody has the time and energy to invest in really understanding a culture. And so when we go there, we bring the way we did things in Boston or in New York and, if we are very good, we put in a few arches and a little dome and say, "Now this is the Middle East." But we do not understand how those people really live — Who are their poets? Who are their musicians? What kind of history have they had? You could go to Karachi when the International Style was in vogue, and you would see German minimalist buildings that were an insult, an affront, to the culture.

I believe architects have had a lot to do with world turmoil today. Just imagine a traditional Middle Eastern society, in which there are mud huts and vernacular architecture, in which the daughter in the family follows certain traditions. And then, all of a sudden, she appears in jeans and is into rock-'n'-roll. There is an unsettlement in that culture and in a few years time, in the middle of all of these mud huts, you have glass towers. Of course you have revolution! So I think we as architects have to understand our social role and the ways we can bring peace and harmony to the world. We have to do more than just import the latest fads and fashions — which are really the product of sensationalist media in this country.

Lozano: I think it's even worse than you describe. I am personally very optimistic, but culturally very pessimistic. In World War II, some cargo planes were shot down over New Guinea, in an area inhabited by what was still a Stone Age population. When the natives arrived at the site of the crash, they found pots, clothing, the gift of the gods! So what they did — and it was really quite intelligent, given their point of view — was to mimic crashes. They set out palm trees and pieces of wood to look like another plane crash, so they could have more gifts from the gods. And this is what most countries are doing today. To some degree, architects are delivering the gifts, but much of it is "Coca-colonialism." Perhaps it is because people believe

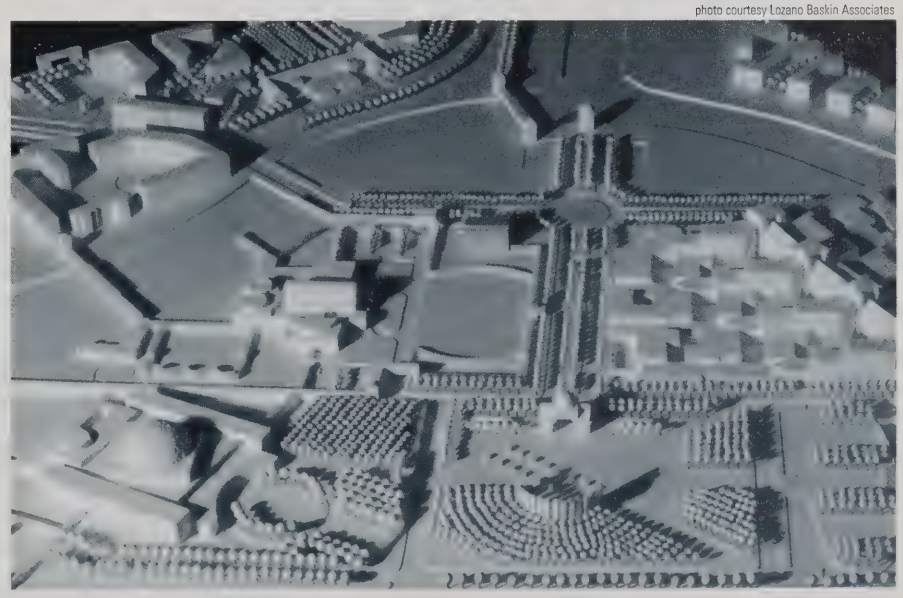
that if they mimic our society, they're going to be as wealthy, as powerful, as wonderful, as beautiful as they think this country is. The perception of our society is extremely different from reality, as we know. We should start by putting our own house in order.

Khadem: I can't agree with you more. I think the problems start with schools, because we don't train architects and designers to provide service in a global society. At the beginning of the Renaissance, there was a parting of ways between Europe and the Middle East — philosophy and thinking developed along completely different paths. How do you respond to a culture that has not developed along the same path as your own, where the thinking is fundamentally different, where problems are not processed following a familiar sequence of analysis and synthesis?

Woo: I would like to ask why American architects should have to deal with those problems. Why should an American architect be responsible for cultural differences? Let me suggest how I think foreign practitioners view American architects practicing abroad. You could rephrase it as why we are practicing there. I can think of three main categories. One is media based. The signature architects — whether Norman Foster or Frank Gehry — are media-based, and once they are media-based, it doesn't matter if they are American or Japanese or European. But because the American media have some edge, there is a lot of American presence. Another category is based on connections. America is ethnically diverse, which means that we often have family or personal connections abroad. Another kind of connection is financial. And another kind is political, because America is a very powerful political machine. And the third category, which I think is much more interesting, is based on American expertise. Not necessarily the kind of management expertise we talked about earlier. But a lot of building types are American inventions to start with — the high-rise building, theme parks, convention centers — we do have an absolute edge in our understanding of them. If we build a new Disney World in Tokyo, that's not an issue of culture. It's an issue of building type. High-rises, airports, shopping centers — we have an accumulated knowledge that no other country can compete with, simply because we invented so much. In my mind, those are the strengths of American architecture, rather than how we handle other cultures. We're not equipped to deal with anyone else's culture. Similarly, we now are seeing foreign architects coming into this market. Their role is not to try to work with our culture; it's to bring their strength or expertise.

Padjen: I'm not sure that we are necessarily imposing the "evil empire" on other cultures. I was in China in 1980 just after it opened up to American travelers. The influx of new Western architecture was already beginning, and the sheer size of the new buildings was an important signal to local communities that things were changing. It was a phenomenon that you could find throughout Southeast Asia. Singapore was destroying entire neighborhoods of the old city, which was what I was there to see. You could argue that it's a noble thing for a Boston architect to promote a more sympathetic understanding of local heritage. But you could also argue that it's Bostonian hubris to go to Shanghai or Singapore and say to the local people that they should keep all their old buildings and old quarters.

photo courtesy Lozano Baskin Associates



Parliament District
Spreebogen, Berlin
Lozano Baskin Associates

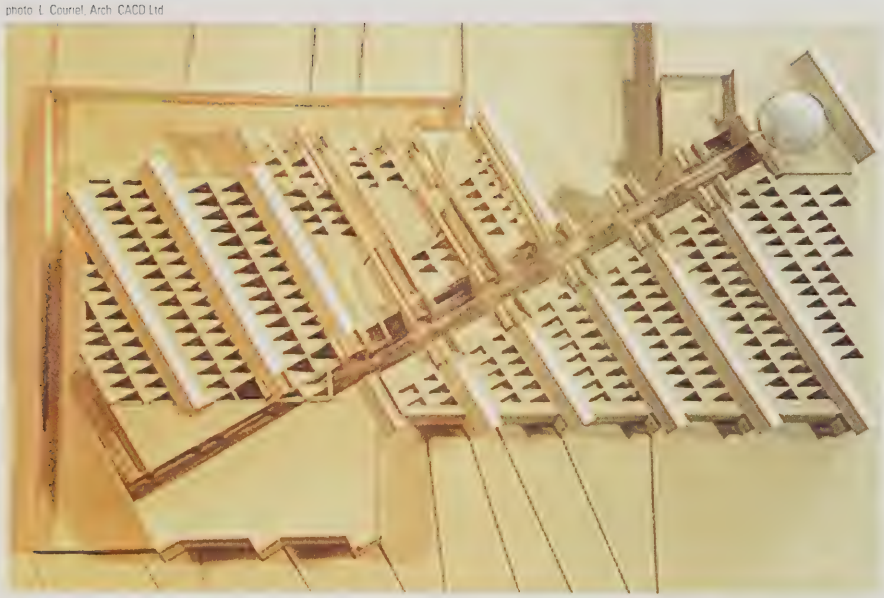
"People believe that if they mimic our society, they're going to be as wealthy, as powerful, as wonderful, as beautiful as they think this country is. The perception of our society is extremely different from reality, as we know. We should start by putting our own house in order."

Eduardo Lozano

Woo: I agree that what we see as valuable is not what they see. They don't value the same things. So if buildings are destroyed, and new high-rises are built, how can we say it's the fault of our American architects? I think our power is very limited. They have their own value systems, and they decide their own needs.

Khadem: I'll give you one little anecdote that illustrates that point. In the early 1970s, we were planning a city for 200,000 people in Iran. We were very careful to develop it in an way that was consistent with the system of architecturally continuous spaces that was very much a part of the tradition of Iran. And the Shah wanted to see our proposal. I think the whole Iranian revolution can be encapsulated by this. A lot of top brass came to the meeting. He looked at the proposal, and I explained it for 10 minutes, telling him why the design was the way it was, why there were a lot of low-rise buildings and just one symbolic tower. And when I was done, he looked at it as if he really appreciated it. But then he said, "I want to ask you something — please put in a few more high-rises. I want this to look like New York." And that was the beginning of the end of that regime.

photo: L. Couriel, Arch. CACD Ltd.



Automobile Museum
Har-Hotzvim, Jerusalem
Lior Couriel, CACD Ltd.

"I believe it is up to each culture to decide its sources, its influences."

Lior Couriel

Couriel: I come from Israel, a society deeply influenced by American society. Our life depends, by and large, on American technology and on American influence. Our television, our universities, our technology — every single aspect of life in Israel gives you the feeling that we are almost part of the United States, because we are so deeply involved in this country. However, if I look at the architecture and urban planning in my country, I don't see the same vast influence — which is surprising. We draw our cultural roots from other sources. I believe it is up to each culture to decide its sources, its influences. Do we allow the American influence to penetrate in an uncontrolled manner, or do we select what we want to draw from? We do admire the technologies and abilities, but we are transforming them in a way which will help us to better create our own culture and architecture. I agree that American project management is something to be learned worldwide. We could probably learn from some of the ethical aspects of practicing here, things that American architects probably consider a very tedious part of their job — that is, conforming to wetland rules, and conforming to the disability act, and conforming to all those fire codes, which are non-existent in other parts of the world. But copying the architecture is a whole different issue.

Di Mambro: We are living in confusing times. Because of that, this debate really should be reconceived. I don't think of architecture as having the leading role in defining cultural changes, unfortunately. I think architecture follows well established cultural changes that are already happening worldwide. The lines of cultures will tend to blur forever with the globalization of information and increased travel. I think that we are in an incredible time of experimentation worldwide. The experiments in urban design that all of us are doing here and abroad are going to get eventually to a new reality. It will be based on sustainability, on environmentally sensitive solutions, on mobility and quality of life, and the specific forms will develop according to the needs of specific communities or regions. The blurring of cultures is already reflected in the blurring of our professional expertise. We don't realize how much we are influenced here by what is happening in Berlin, for example. Foreign architects such as Renzo Piano and Norman Foster are finally getting the Boston architectural community to look at modernity in a slightly different way than it has in

the past. And I think it's this blurring that we really need to understand, this penetration of ideas. It's happening not by osmosis, but by synthesis.

de Monchaux: You are touching upon a scenario of a much more nuanced, subtle, site-specific, country-specific, client-specific set of experiences. And they don't easily enable generalization. But one of the things that you touched on is to me one of the most exciting aspects of being here in Boston. It is a place uncommonly well-equipped for learning from others. To me, the most powerful argument for having the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture at Harvard and MIT is that it that enables us to study and learn something about other places in the world, other building approaches, other urban approaches. We can use them as a resource to discover the fundamentals that are intriguing to us and that we can think about and incorporate into our own work. Most of the people around this table came here as students. We picked this place because of the opportunities to learn here.

photo: Richard Lee and Nader Tehrani



The Toledo House
Bilbao, Spain
Office dA

"I do not think that culture is fixed. It changes, and it changes radically."

Monica Ponce de Leon

When I ask myself what globalization is about, in respect to our profession, two very distinct ingredients come to mind. One is the transformation of the market; the procurement of buildings and services depends increasingly on standards and techniques that are global. The other ingredient is the communication revolution, which is informing us about foreign opportunities, and in turn informing others in the world of the opportunities that are available here. This is leading to unimagined opportunities. In conjunction with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, MIT is developing a Web site called "ArchNet" which will allow architects and schools of architecture throughout the world to have access to a knowledge base about Islamic architecture. It's related to a much bigger idea that MIT is undertaking, which is to put all of its course content on the Web to make it freely available throughout the world. It seems to me that this represents a much healthier way to look at globalization — practicing internationally as a way of learning.

Di Mambro: If what you are saying is true, that knowledge is going to be there for everybody to use whether they are in Israel or Cambodia, then regional and cultural differences as we have known them in the past will make no difference. Already the transmission of the idea is instantaneous. Already, we are working with foreign consultants on a 24-hour day — they work while you are sleeping and you receive their electronic files when you arrive at the office in the morning. Pride of authorship, the patenting of ideas, is obsolete. We will see a new type of culture that will have to transcend many of the poetic aspects that Mozhan [Khadem] was talking about, because there is no way to preserve or protect that kind of culture anymore. I am very sympathetic to what he was saying, because I come from a place that culturally was very similar, but it has been blown away. And change is inevitable. To protect the hill towns in Italy — one of the urbanistic treasures that Italy has given to the world — is hopeless. But they will be reinvented in a new way, and that is what we need to understand.

Lozano: Why is it hopeless?

Di Mambro: It is hopeless because those urbanistic forms were the reflection of a culture, of an economy, of a way of life that is not there any more.

Lozano: Antonio, allow me to disagree. Sometimes we tend to think that there is a one-to-one relationship of built form and program, and it's not the case. For instance, here we are sitting in a building that was built a century ago for something else. What was it?

Padjen: A coffee warehouse.

Lozano: A coffee warehouse! And here we are, all little grains of coffee. It works fantastically. This building is wonderful: it's an office, but it could be housing — I could live here perfectly well. It could be a doctor's office, a library, a school, a cultural center, you name it. So, too, the hill towns. They could be a wonderful environment. Like Boston. I think we love Boston in part because we can interact, in part because it's very rich, but in part because the Boston environment has been in development for generations.

Padjen: I'd like to turn to another aspect of cultural trade. Whatever one might say of American cultural influence, I do think it is part of our heritage to have an inferiority complex about American popular culture. You can follow it historically: Initially as a colony, we turned to England for direction; later in the19th century through the 20th century, we looked to Europe. In the last 30 years, we have seen more Asian influences in our popular culture. Are we fascinated by the signature architects because we are still lacking self-confidence? Are we still borrowing European sophistication?

Ponce de Leon: I don't think the issue is foreign architects coming to America. I think the issue is breaking out of the mold. It's especially true in Boston. It is quite shocking that in a city that is culturally so mixed, we have been producing essentially the same buildings for over 20 years. And we really seem, culturally and architecturally, to have fallen behind the rest of the world. So I think we are grateful to the foreign architects who come here.

Khadem: The main problem is that we believe architecture is about technology, and technology can be transferred. But architecture is about human spirit. Technology has to be brought to its service. The way the mind of a Persian works, or the mind of an Arab or of a Chinese, is vastly different from the way the mind of an Englishman works, because it has gone through a certain historical sequence that the others haven't.

Ponce de Leon: But by the same token, I do not think that culture is fixed. It changes, and it changes radically. The Caracas that I grew up in, which was 1950s modernity, was very different from the Caracas my mother grew up in, which was a colonial city, and it is radically different from the Caracas of today, only 30 years later.

Khadem: Each place develops along its own cultural path, not according to someone else's cultural path.

Ponce de Leon: I don't know if I would agree with that, because in the 1950s, Caracas was imitating the Le Corbusier model quite closely, and now it is imitating the suburban Miami model. The 1950s turned out to be a successful experiment, and I think Venezuela invented an interpretation of Le Corbusier that perhaps was more successful than the original. Whereas today it is a dreadful version of Miami, and of course the Miami model was dreadful to begin with. So I am not convinced that it is a self-made or self-imposed matter. I think the reality is much more complex.

Woo: I agree with Monica that Boston architecture in the last 20 years was pretty stuffy. Clients, for one thing, didn't allow us to do much. Therefore, except for the architects who were able to build outside the city, there aren't many who have had experience or training in a new way of building here. So I think it may be interesting to think in different terms, and I think the presence of foreign architects is a terrific opportunity. I am sure there will be some failures, but Boston architects fail, too. But Boston is finally getting onto a global stage and I think that is not bad.

de Monchaux: I'd like to go back to the question of whether this interest in international architecture on the part of Boston architects stems from a sense of inadequacy in some sense. I think it comes from quite a different place — I think it comes from the extraordinary relative affluence that Boston has enjoyed intellectually, as well as financially. It's enabled us to study in other places — and bring those ideas home. I think that we're graced with an extraordinary resource and curiosity about the rest of the world.

Khadem: This sense of inadequacy occurs more outside of America. I think we as architects have a role to make people aware that their place in world society is important and their culture is beautiful. When I was working on a university in Turkey, the architect who represented the client became a good friend. One day he said, "Mozhan, you are from this part of the world. You keep talking about how the architecture in Turkey should have the ambience of Turkey and should glorify the beauty of Turkey and so on." And then he looked at me, and he pointed to the streets. "But look," he said, "Look at these people! They are not worth anything! They are nomads!" I said, "Why do you say that? They have their own culture, and it has its own beauty, and it has contributed to world society." And he said, "Okay, if it is so good, why didn't we have a Leonardo DaVinci? Why didn't we have a Beethoven? Why didn't we have a Shakespeare?" And I said to him, "You pose a very good question. But why didn't the West have great literary figures like Rumi, Sadi, Attar, Hafiz, and Firdosi? And they don't even know what they are missing!" Four months later, we met again, and he said to me, "Mozhan, I believe in what you said — you were right!" These people are starving to know that they count in the world. And I think if we go there equipped to deal with another culture, our architecture is going to become a lot better.

The problem of our world is that we are all trained and educated in Western literature, Western music, the Western way of life. And the problem in the world is not that we in the West feel superior. The problem is that we in the West have succeeded in convincing the rest of the world that they are inferior. As long as that feeling exists, the world tension will continue, and our architecture is going to suffer.

Woo: I was at an international conference on the East and West a few years ago. The young architects from the East really resented those terms, East and West. We confuse our definitions — when we are talking about the West, do we mean modernity? Or are we referring to a cultural and geographic identity distinct from the East? Frequently we mean modernity. And those young architects resented that definition — they want to operate on an equal basis.

Padjen: We have talked about the transfer of knowledge and the transfer of cultural values in terms of delivering the goods unto someone else, but we haven't looked at the reverse. Have we in fact been educated by our exposure to other cultures? Can we identify architectural ideas that we have imported? One that comes to mind is the German Green movement, which has influenced the sustainable movement here.

Di Mambro: I think we are learning how to do contemporary architecture in an historic context — that's something that we are importing *de facto* from Europe, and more and more Americans are going to do what the Europeans have done. Previously, we said here in Boston, "Don't do Modern — it's not part of our heritage." I also think that we are learning the value of investment in infrastructure, especially in public transportation. That is a European idea that will change forever the form of our cities.



Parco San Giuliano
Venice/Mestre, Italy
Antonio Di Mambro + Associates, Inc.

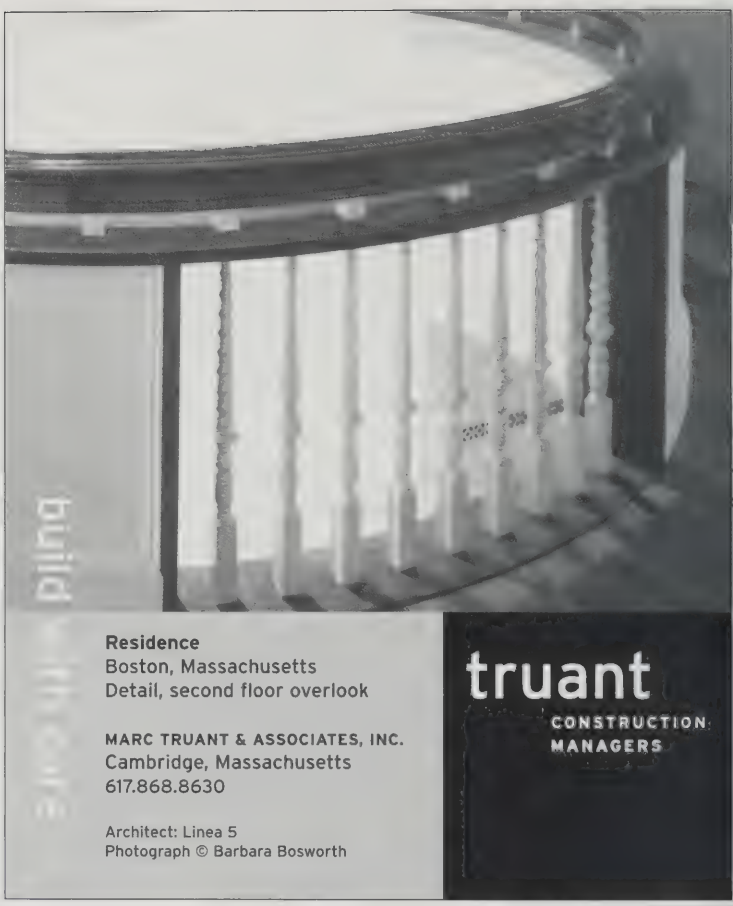
"Our profession has changed dramatically. It is without boundaries. We are not what we were. And that reality will change our relation to the production of architecture."

Antonio Di Mambro FAIA

Couriel: When Tom Wolfe wrote *From Bauhaus to Our House*, he rejected this notion of importing big new ideas. His view was that people were saying, "Don't bring us those grand ideas, we want very simple things — we want pitched roofs, we want symmetrical windows, we don't want to live in a concept." When I read his book, I didn't understand it at all, because everywhere I looked there was Bauhaus. I live in a country where the architecture has been based on Bauhaus ideas, and a house for us is a Bauhaus house — white walls and horizontal strip windows and everything. So, I don't know if this notion still exists in the US — "don't bring us concepts." On the other hand, I can tell you that Israel has definitely been influenced by the American Green movement. Ten years ago we started the Israeli Union of Environmental Defense following an American model. There were seven people, and I was one of the founders. Today, it has 2,500 members. But even America, an industrial empire, was actually based, just 400 years ago, on the grounds of a Native American culture that lived in total harmony with the environment. So what happened to that? Americans don't need to go to Europe or Asia to understand that — they have their roots right here and this is something they can integrate into their current society and culture.

Woo: Working abroad is very stimulating — I find that it really invigorates what I am doing here as well as what I am doing there. You see things from a different angle. And you often have opportunities that you don't get here, in terms of the kinds of projects that you work on. Here, unless you've already done a museum, for example, you won't get a museum project. But abroad, it doesn't matter. We also tend to be self-centered in the way we practice here — we assume that we know more than we do. I've never had a client here suggest that I travel abroad and look at similar buildings. But in foreign work, it has happened quite a few times, and I've been asked to travel to Europe and Japan just to study a building type and see what is new.

Di Mambro: At some point in working abroad, we all face the question of whether you can "go home again." You cannot go home again. You are a different person. You do work there if you have a chance, but you are not part of that society as you were before. And in the same way, I think our profession has changed dramatically. It is without boundaries. We are not what we were. And that reality will change our relation to the production of architecture, sometimes negatively. But I am very optimistic. This is a moment of confusion, but it is also a moment when we — all of us around the world — are grabbing information, grabbing knowledge. At some point, all of us will come back to the roots — the roots of architecture. ■■■



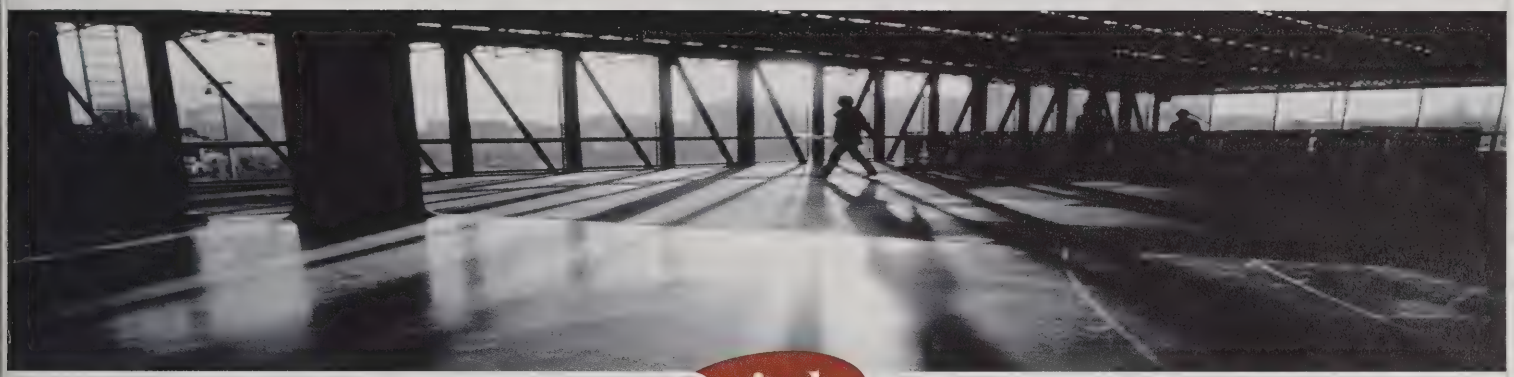


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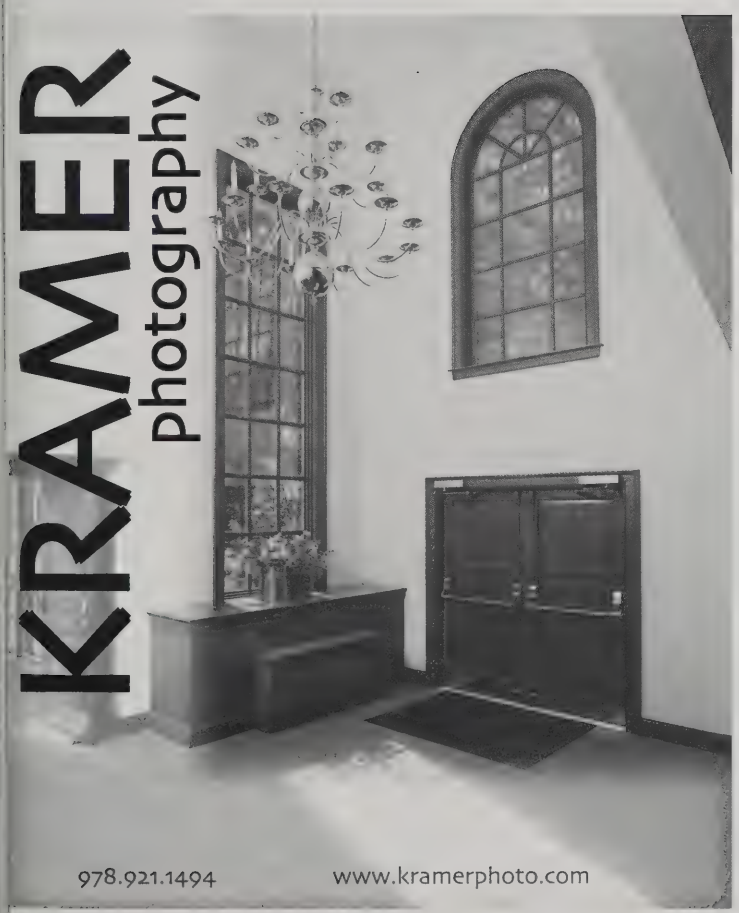
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Competitive Edge:

Thinking globally, building locally

by James McCown

Lyme Properties' Kendall Square Development Cambridge, Massachusetts

Left to right:

Masterplan model by Urban Strategies Toronto

Office/lab building by Steven Ehrlich Architects Los Angeles

Genzyme headquarters by Behnisch, Behnisch Stuttgart

Office/lab building by Anshen+Allen-LA Los Angeles

Alvar Aalto once wrote: "The speculator in real estate is enemy number one of the architect" — a cutting bit of Nordic candor on a love/hate relationship. Developers, for their part, are generally content to leave the Aaltos of today, the international "starchitects," to universities and museums — witness the dozens of global competitions for academic and public art gallery work now in progress. And yet sometimes the twain do meet. A $400-million mixed-use development in Cambridge by Lyme Properties is an example of a real-estate company undertaking an unusual multi-phase international competition with the goal of stimulating adventurous architecture. The site is in Kendall Square — a neighborhood more known for cookie-cutter, red-brick buildings and a suburban office-park character.

The competition was divided into four phases to address individual sites within the 10-acre parcel and to select a landscape architect. The process extended over a year, concluding in fall 2000, with each phase having its own jury and list of invited architects. Ten European and Canadian firms participated, including Nicholas Grimshaw; Allies and Morrison; MacCormac Jamieson Prichard; and Short and Associates (all of London); Teun Koolhaas (Almere, Netherlands); Benthem Crouwel (Amsterdam); Behnisch, Behnisch (Stuttgart); Architects Alliance; A.J. Diamond (both of Toronto); and Williams, Asselin, Ackaoui (Montreal). There were also 10 American firms representing West Coast and local talent: CBT; Leers Weinzapfel; Michael van Valkenburgh; Stephen Stimson; Sasaki; Machado and Silvetti; NBBJ; Kallmann McKinnell & Wood; Steven Ehrlich; and Anshen+Allen-LA. While the master plan and design guidelines, by Urban Strategies of Toronto, are expressed in the now-familiar, deferential syntax of the "new urbanism," participants were required to respond with schemes that bespeak the risk-taking nature of biotechnology, the neighborhood's primary tenant base.



"European architects tend to be much less squeamish than their American counterparts," comments Dan Winny AIA, director of design and planning for Lyme. "They can translate traditional urban themes into modern form that is not imitative." Winny said his firm "cast a wide net" for international design talent. "We wanted firms that were itching to design here but had not as yet — people for whom this would be a real opportunity." Super high-profile offices like Norman Foster's were considered, he said, "but they're too busy. We wanted firms that would give us their attention."

Nevertheless, international designers don't seem to have benefited from outright favoritism. Los Angeles architect Steven Ehrlich FAIA, who competed successfully against two high-profile London offices — Nicholas Grimshaw and Short and Associates — notes: "I have a feeling that what we presented was as architecturally challenging as what they presented. I don't believe the jury was predisposed to picking a foreigner." The results seem to confirm this: Four American firms (including Boston-based CBT and landscape architect Michael van Valkenburgh and the Los Angeles office of Ashen+Allen) were selected, as were two foreign firms (Architects Alliance and Behnisch, Behnisch).

In addition to three office/lab buildings, the complex will comprise a hotel, two residential buildings, street-level retail, restaurants, and two parks, one with an ice skating rink. The linchpin for lending 24-hour animation to the district is the four-hall Constellation Performing Arts and Film Center, to be designed by The Stubbins Associates, based in Cambridge (not selected through the competition process). Just as Lyme looked to Europe for fresh takes on the urban

plan, so Constellation was inspired by the Barbican Centre in London and the Künstlerhaus in Vienna, both multi-hall projects that cater to small and medium-size arts organizations.

Ken Greenberg, who guided the Urban Strategies master-planning team and who also managed the competitions, says that, in assembling short lists of architects, he looked for "people who like cities…and think it is fun to play on an urban chessboard," adding that "Lyme was willing to invest in design as a research tool." Winny, who says his company paid participants $10,000 plus travel expenses, agrees: "We got five or six different takes on the master plan from architects used to designing on tight sites in historic contexts with highly restrictive energy laws."

One "different take" will be the first US building by German "green" architect Stefan Behnisch. Housing Genzyme's new corporate headquarters, the building represents a synthesis of many of the elements espoused by the well-known advocate of sustainable architecture: double façades with walkable buffer zones to minimize heat gain and loss; operable windows; a rooftop heliostat to direct sunlight into deep interior spaces; and elevations so replete with trees and other plant life that they resemble vertical parks.

"The large central hall," Behnisch explains, "grows up like a tree, similar to the pattern of a town with smaller and larger roads, squares, gardens and parks." The architect, whose rumpled demeanor suggests a college professor, favors the somewhat non-Teutonic notion of "architectural imperfection": "Architecture must not distance itself from people by its perfection…Imperfection puts people at ease and makes every building look different." Other current work by Behnisch includes an 800,000-square-foot bank headquarters in Hannover, Germany, destined to be one of the largest office buildings in the world with no air conditioning.

The Behnisch scheme has its detractors, including Dennis Carlone AIA, an urban designer and consultant to the city: "I'm not excited about the building. The façade is a glass sheet. What are you going to be looking at?" It's a point that underscores a characteristic of many competition-winners: the seductive power of a strong idea, which risks becoming a fatal flaw. Carlone notes another situation common to many competitions: The scheme for the housing competition by Teun Koolhaas, cousin of celebrity architect Rem Koolhaas, completely ignored the master plan and was thrown out on the first pass.

Another potential weakness of this kind of competition can be the potluck effect of so many designers bringing different ideas to the table. The design guidelines by Urban Strategies are intended to prevent design chaos, but Lyme Properties seems to support the notion of erring on the side of creativity. Ehrlich, whose firm is designing a building for Vertex Pharmaceuticals on the site's northwest corner, says the developer encouraged exploration by the individual architects over rigid contextualism. "All of the architects have been brought together on several occasions to plop their models into an overall site model," he notes. "We've not been told to match, but we're good neighbors."

Lyme's Winny say his company's vision for Kendall Square "has been slow and expensive, and developers tend to want to do things quicker and cheaper." Alluding to the fictional cubicle purgatory of Scott Adams' cartoons, he adds: "Our tenants want space that will generate ideas, and that's not going to happen in Dilbertland."

Lyme is to be commended for eschewing the "get-me-a-Gehry" mindset that our architectural star system has engendered. The architects it assembled are relatively low-profile offices known for cerebral, measured approaches, using vocabularies more rooted in classical modernism that any of the design fashions of the day. And yet one wonders about the wild card of the Behnisch design. The architect will have to make a case — and a strong one — that the eco-friendly tenets of his approach are more than just green window dressing.

But these collaborations and this process also offer the opportunity for reflection on both sides of the architect/developer table. There appears to be much less animosity between the two in Europe than in the US. Maybe our elite architects need to stop thinking of developers only as rapacious opportunists, while developers need to revise their view of high-profile architects as black-turtlenecked dreamers with no clue about free-market forces. In other words, prove Aalto wrong. ■■■

James McCown is a freelance writer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.





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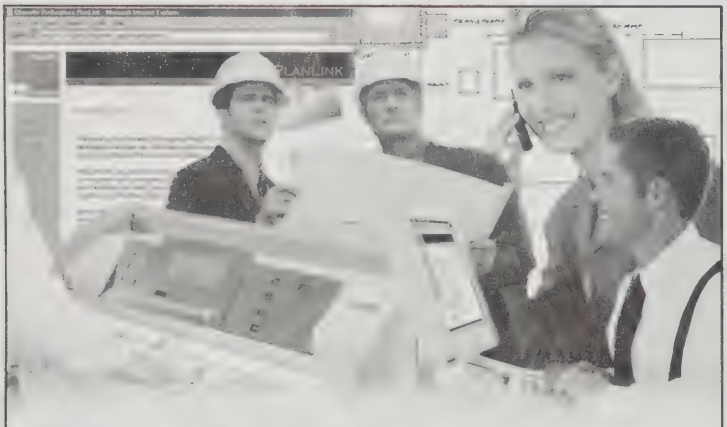
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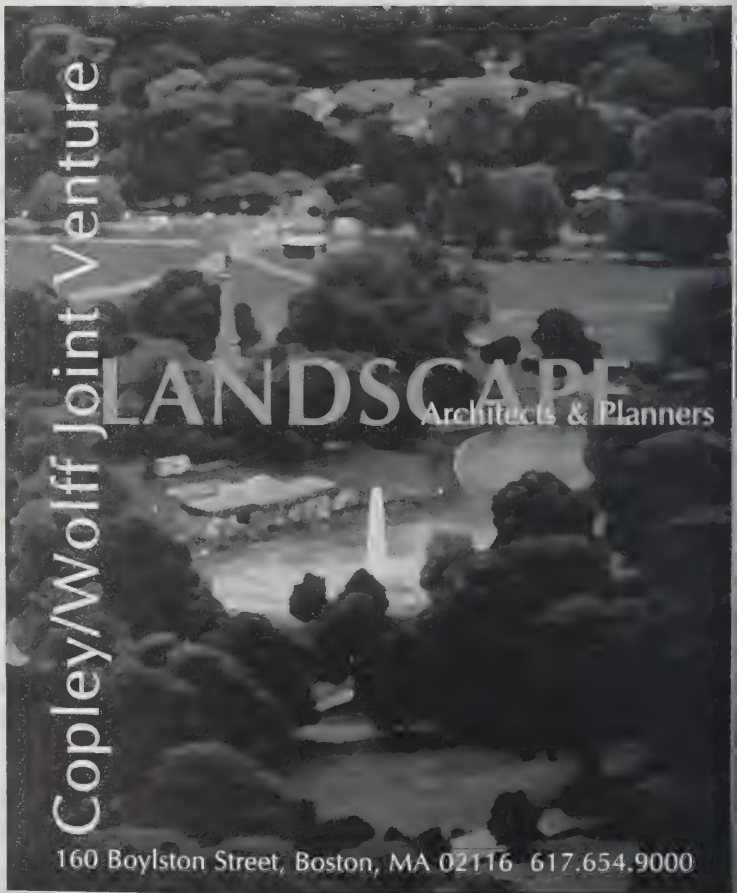
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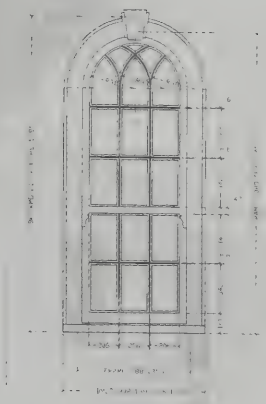
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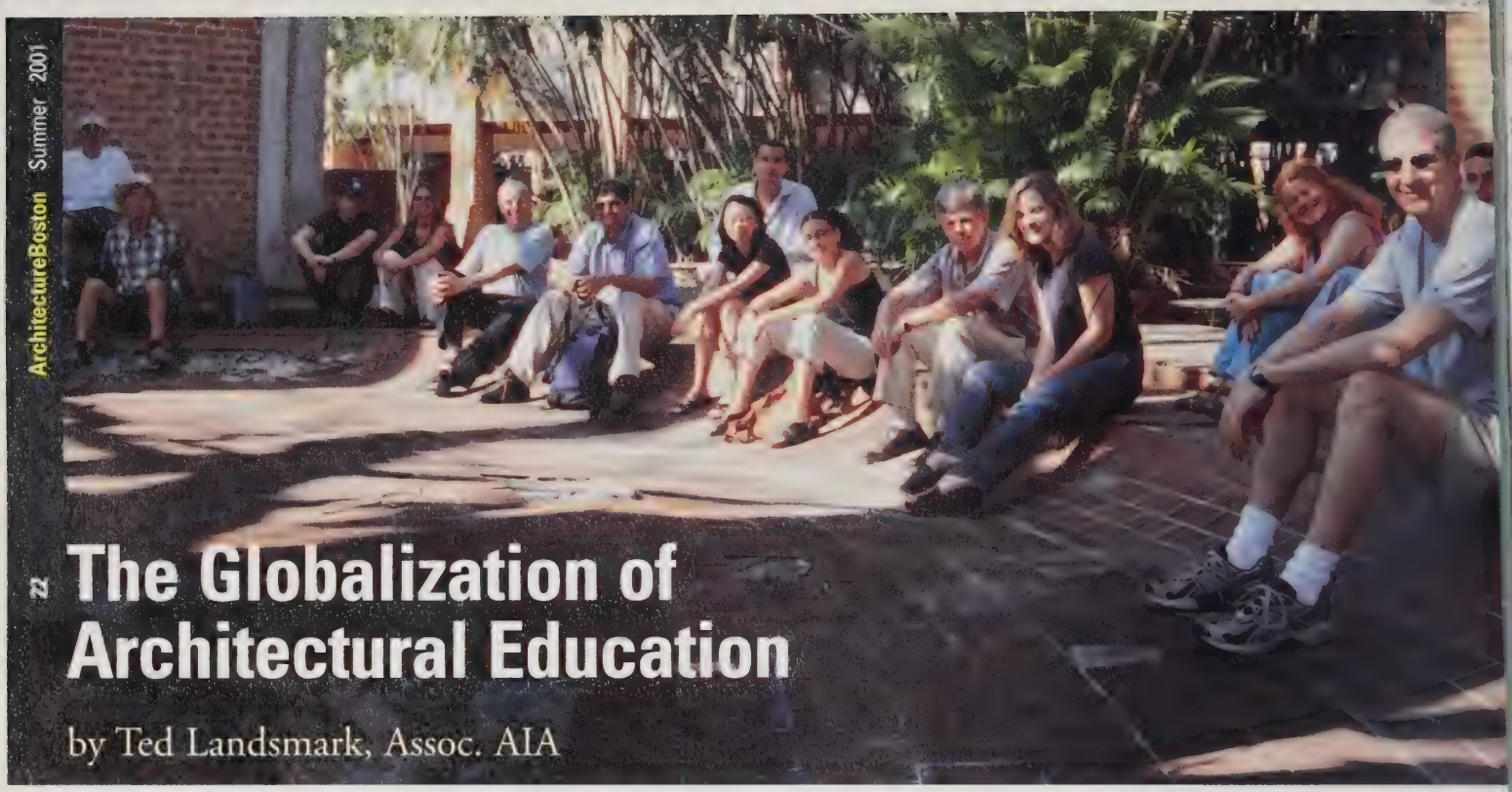
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The Globalization of Architectural Education

by Ted Landsmark, Assoc. AIA

International enrollment in Boston-area schools:

- 20% Harvard
- 24% MIT
- 16% Babson
- 14% RISD
- 12% Suffolk
- 10% Northeastern
- 10% Wentworth

Above:
Urban-design students from the Harvard Graduate School of Design at the National Schools of Art in Havana, Cuba with Professor Lee Cott FAIA (fifth from left) and Cuban architect Mario Coyula (fifth from right)

The traditional image of the New England architecture firm as a tweedy bastion of Yankee designers has been replaced by a reality of fast-moving entrepreneurs providing design, consulting, and management services in a global environment. Some principals quietly acknowledge that their working drawings are prepared, at least at the initial stages, by digitally connected shops in Egypt and India. Even small firms are regularly engaged in international work — once the domain of a few large offices. Up-and-coming designers can reasonably expect to attain some degree of international celebrity.

But globalization means more than access to overseas markets. Recently released 2000 Census figures have shocked New Englanders into the realization that many of our cities now house statistical majorities largely composed of culturally diverse ethnic and racial groups once considered "minorities." Recent immigration has exceeded expectations. Yet, despite an economy that has placed a premium on hiring anyone who can perform well, many firms still do not employ significant numbers of workers who reflect the emerging diversity of our region. In this context, we have to examine how our design schools are meeting the challenges of preparing students for a more culturally diverse global design environment.

International design students on American campuses

A record 514,723 international students came to the United States in 1999, increasing nearly 5 percent from 1998–99, and up over 230,000 from two decades ago. The largest percentage (10 percent) is from China. Boston University, Harvard, Northeastern, MIT, and Berklee have the largest international student enrollments in New England, with about 13,500 among them. International students contribute over $960 million to the Massachusetts economy.

New England's design schools in particular have become reliant on international students and faculty to sustain enrollments. At schools where tuitions account for over 85 percent of annual operating revenues (including the Boston Architectural Center [BAC], Northeastern and Wentworth), international enrollments can make the difference between operating surpluses and deficits. Administrators welcome international students because they generally do not need financial aid — the vast majority are funded from personal and family sources. They help spread the schools' financial exposure through global economic cycles. They significantly enhance campus diversity and make loyal and generous alumni. Such students account for 35 percent of all students enrolled at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (foreign enrollment across the entire university is 20 percent).

International design students in New England include Canadians familiar with American language, customs, and pedagogy; Bosnians designing refugee housing; sub-Saharan Africans who have argued in studios that AIDS is a Western-imposed racist health conspiracy; and Hong Kong-trained students pursuing post-professional studies in high-density, mixed-use housing development. There is little evidence that large numbers of international students have affected teaching methods and programs, or have generated cohorts of like-minded students pursuing particular design strategies. Nonetheless, students at the Harvard GSD have had a programmatic impact because they tend to seek post-professional degrees after completing five-year professional programs in their home countries. Elsewhere, international students are only admitted to Masters programs at the BAC because they receive more individualized attention than may be available in the larger Bachelors program. Perhaps counterintuitively, however, the presence of international students may be pushing technological fluency in American design schools. International students are generally familiar with new developments in computer-aided design (CAD). A recent visit to Havana's architecture school indicated that even in the midst of an American embargo, students were using up-to-date software on fairly contemporary equipment. Europeans often arrive with experience on systems such as ArchiCAD that are deemed by American students to be more intuitive than the AutoCAD commonly used in American firms. This campus exposure and events such as the Boston CyberArts Festival have generated interest in the transfer of new technologies into studios and work, and encouraged software developers to present more varied offerings at design conventions.

Study abroad

Increasingly, the international trade in design education is becoming a bilateral activity. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) reports that the educational innovation most sought by American design students is a mandatory year of study abroad, for direct exposure to the ways different cultures conceive, experience, and manage design processes. Over the past four years, the number of American students abroad has increased 45 percent, to nearly 130,000. In architecture, students seek to emulate the 19th-century model of undertaking a Grand Tour before embarking on their professional careers. Most of New England's architecture schools conduct studio or research activities abroad. Over the past two years, for example, Harvard has conducted studios in China, Cuba, and Geneva, and an exchange program with ETH in Zurich. Rhode Island School of Design has study programs in locations including Latvia, England, Finland, France, Israel, and Sweden. Wentworth conducts a program in Italy, and the Boston Architectural Center has a summer program in Paris.

Studies of the efficacy of study abroad have tended to focus more on student satisfaction (generally found to be high) than on improvements in student learning. Anecdotal evidence suggests that study abroad is "transformational," with large gains in foreign-language proficiency and intercultural learning capacity. Yet there is growing evidence that as students share their observations of Bilbao, Havana, or Tokyo, their views of a globalized architecture are placing increased demands on faculty to find innovative ways of interpreting culturally divergent ways of defining space, understanding perceptions of density, examining community development, and reading the influence of landscape on urban and rural dynamics.

Architectural program accreditors seem to agree with the students. Accreditation criteria for the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) require that schools, apart from traditional professional requirements, also prepare students to be leaders in a culturally diverse society.

Architectural school administrators report major efforts to incorporate diverse design references into their curricula, but indicate that traditions of intellectual autonomy still enable individual faculty members to control what is actually taught in studios and classrooms. Apart from what is presented in major design publications, individual faculty members are not always current with global influences on design, so the use of culturally diverse references varies widely. Discussions with students at local design schools indicate that mainstream faculty show relatively little passion for breaking from traditionally-accepted Modernist approaches to teaching architecture. Canonical American and European-dominated Modernist design paradigms appear to continue to define teaching methods at most New England design schools, with limited reference to the globalized environment.

Wider effects of globalized design education

Design firms that want to draw from the talent pool that our design schools attract must traverse a maze of immigration rules to hire recently graduated international designers. The strength of the New England design economy over the past decade has generated huge employment opportunities, but most firms lack the human resources expertise to take advantage of these new international workers. However, employers who have retained experienced legal counsel have found that negotiating through Immigration and Naturalization work rules can be less difficult than anticipated, and such efforts generally result in the recruitment of particularly loyal employees. Yet it remains unclear as to how the placement of recent international graduates in local firms may positively affect the growth of business opportunities abroad.

Clearly, many of our foreign students are fundamentally changing New England's design community by introducing new, culturally diverse perspectives that enrich the educational, and later, the workplace environments. In the process, our insular New England design identity is shifting, and our professional and educational hegemony is being challenged. But there is no doubt that ultimately we will be stronger. ■■■

Ted Landsmark, MED, JD, PhD, is the president of the Boston Architectural Center.



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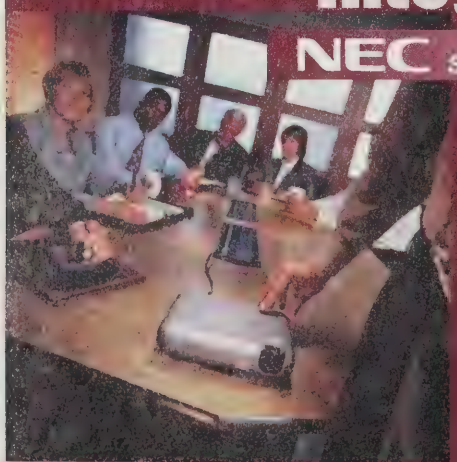


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"The degree of slope certainly added to the challenge of setting the 500-pound pieces of glass," Hoyt recounts. "We rigged a cable winch at ceiling height and from that suspended our battery-operated power suction cups. We typically needed six workers to handle those larger panels.

"Glass that large is optimum for viewing but certainly not for installation," he emphasized.

Terminal II at Lindbergh Field demonstrates how glazing systems must be engineered to readily adapt to the desired form and functionality. Both were achieved in this case without compromising the glazing contractor's profitability.

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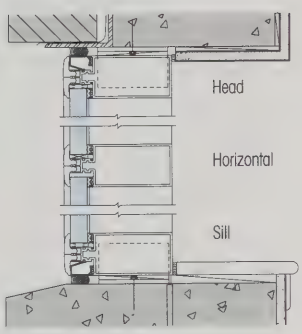
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Lessons from Away

Many Boston architects who work overseas find that they have embarked on an unexpected program of continuing education.

Here are some of the lessons they have learned.



Working overseas can be both an architectural and economic challenge.

Perhaps one of the greatest architectural challenges is the extent to which you try to relate the design to local conditions and building materials. My former office, TAC, designed the city of Jubail in Saudi Arabia. We attempted to respect local traditions — both building and cultural traditions — such as preserving local walking patterns to the market. However, our clients, many of whom had been to college in the United States, wanted a city like those in this country, where everyone would drive to the market. Finding a balance between two cultures, incorporating the best of both, is where skill and sensitivity is required to find a solution that works not only when the project is completed, but also after the users have adapted it for their particular needs.

The economics can be similarly daunting. The cost of working abroad can be substantially more than at home — in ways that are frequently unpredictable. In the enthusiasm for large projects overseas, do not lose your home base. Overseas work can disappear in a day through wars, change in a country's leadership, or religious influences. Keep a balance — not only in your international/domestic work ratio, but also in your checkbook. ■■■

John Harkness FAIA of Fletcher Harkness Cohen Moneyhun in Boston was a founding partner of The Architects Collaborative (TAC) in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

After many years of working abroad in seven countries, I still return to lessons learned in my first overseas work experience: my two years in Columbia with the Peace Corps. Flush with the knowledge (and arrogance) that comes with a graduate degree, I prepared a design for a new "community facility" at the request of the village leaders. I was confident that I could break new ground, improve the technology, and shape the skyline.

The drawings were submitted to the authorities. I testified to their constructibility. After the requisite bureaucratic delay, word came that the funding had been approved. And with the passage of even more time came the word that the building was near completion.

It was with great anticipation that I climbed the mountain to visit the village — Howard Roark off to view his first success.

My arrival at the village was an excuse for celebration. Finally, fed, doused with great quantities of *aquadiente*, no longer fully erect, I set off with the village leaders to view my *oeuvre*. And there it stood, bearing absolutely no resemblance to the drawings.

I hesitated, but could not resist asking for the explanation they felt no need to provide. Their response: "The drawings were great, they worked — we got the money!"

The moral (I must remind myself each morning): Act in good faith and with patience, realizing that you can never fully understand your client's intentions nor completely control the outcome of your designs. ■■■

C. Ronald Ostberg AIA is a principal and the director of design at The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His work has included projects in Singapore, Kuwait, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Armenia, and he serves on the property committee of St. James, Florence, and St. Paul's, Rome, Italy.



photo: Gustavo Ferrari



Meandering the streets of a European metropolis is more than just good exercise — it's a memorable, even humbling experience that reminds visiting architects that they have much to learn, even if they are visiting because of their supposed professional expertise.

Despite scores of visits to Germany to oversee design and construction work, I am still learning from my walks in Berlin. They have convinced me that many who live here in America suffer from a narrow mindset: that the historic city is simply a collection of individual buildings and structures, as if the city were a museum. In Berlin, however, the approach to design is far more holistic. The historical and urban planning context as a whole is taken into consideration, ensuring a humane coexistence.

The core of a prototypical European city is the city block, encouraging a 24-hour city that is dynamic and culturally diverse. Within a Berlin block, one finds a microcosm of the city: technological complexity and architectural tradition in harmony, interior courtyards alive with landscaping and activity, as well as a unique aggregation of residential, commercial, institutional and light industrial use — all coexisting in one district.

It's a concept that would strike some people as un-American. And perhaps that's the point. The New World can still learn some tricks from the Old. ■■■

Hans D. Strauch AIA is a principal of Boston-based HDS/Hans D. Strauch & Associates Inc., an internationally recognized architectural firm that has completed projects in the United States and Europe for corporate, private, and institutional clients.

For our design of the Scientific Center in Kuwait, I naïvely felt we had gone the distance in immersing ourselves in the culture of the region. We had looked at Arabic architecture — the arches, the tile patterns, and the screens. We studied Bedouin tents and the sails of the *dhous* in the gulf. We took the process even further with the design of the aquarium for the project, extending our story of life in the water to exploring the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula — a bit of a stretch from our previous wet exhibits.

However, when we came to the exhibits in the children's facility, Discovery Place, we were unaware when we fell back on our preconceptions about learning science. Without thinking, we began to work with classic "participation exhibits," as if every child was a junior researcher, out to conquer nature.

Luckily, we were working with a perceptive contingent of educators and consultants, familiar with Islam and the region, who were quick to see through the subtleties of our misconceptions. As with other aspects of the culture of the Middle East, religion and learning are inseparable, subject to differing interpretations of the Koran. Our obsession with scientific "cause and effect" had to be leavened with the understanding that any investigation of nature in Islam would also demonstrate an appreciation of the wonder of Allah's creations. Any effective learning would need to start with the presentation of that "wonder." It certainly changed our exhibits, and we learned something to bring back home. Always dig a little deeper under your assumptions. ■■■

Peter Kuttner FAIA, president of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a past president of the BSA, lived in Turkey for three years. Cambridge Seven's overseas work includes projects in Kuwait, Lisbon, Osaka, Bangkok, and Genoa.

Left to right:

US Embassy
Singapore
The Stubbins Associates

Mosse Palais
Berlin
HDS/Hans D. Strauch & Associates

The Scientific Center
Kuwait City
Cambridge Seven Associates

Lessons from Away



Photo courtesy Wood and Zapata

There is an old Chinese saying: "riding a horse looking for flowers." A young Chinese woman on our project team used this phrase to describe her feelings about what was happening to her beloved city of Shanghai in the summer of 1998. At that time, CNN reported that one-fifth of all the construction cranes in the world were in this city. The scene was right out of Fritz Lang's classic film, *Metropolis*. Beneath this immense maze of urban infrastructure, under several meters of demolition rubble, the old port city of Shanghai was disappearing, trampled underfoot in the search for progress.

Today, there are not as many cranes. Old Shanghai continues to vanish, but not as fast. With phase one of a mixed-use development nearly complete, we are now beginning phase two. Most of the architecture for the second phase will be produced locally. This is as it should be. The days of the Western firm "rep office" are numbered. In this city of 15 million, more and more architects (both Chinese and foreign) are opening private practices. Everyday there is less and less need to import design and export fees.

Why are we still there? Maybe it's because we know how to walk beside the horse. Maybe our client believes we know something they do not know — yet. ■■■

Ben Wood AIA is a principal of Wood and Zapata in Boston. His work in Shanghai includes a masterplan for 16 million square feet of new offices and apartments.

The most unexpected things can happen to a beautifully conceived design once it ventures into the international marketplace. The site can suddenly change, and you find your building in another city: The Asian client for one tower designed by a Boston architect has since proposed six different sites for the project. Perhaps even more disconcerting, the building's intended use can change dramatically: A skyscraper in China, planned as bank offices, eventually included a chicken farm on the 43rd floor. The new use supplies fresh food to an urban area, but layering farms vertically seems like a post-disaster solution for urban evolution rather than a well-planned design.

The problem is a basic misunderstanding of client and design goals. In the international marketplace, architectural design often is used as a declarative billboard stating the nation or region's emergence into the global economy. The architect is designing a building with a specific reason for existing, but sometimes the client really only wants a shell that, like a Potemkin-directed tour, projects an image. And sometimes architects anxious to get into the press forget about the consequences to the client as they conduct their own Potemkin tour as marketing tool. The development of a real understanding between the client and the architect is the most important structure we, as American architects, can build. ■■■

Estelle Carley Jackson, Assoc. AIA, is principal of Estelle Jackson Associates Incorporated in Boston and London and is the chair of the BSA International Committee



photo courtesy Arrowstreet

Fishing is big in Iceland. Salmon fishing is biggest. So when my Icelandic client invited me on a salmon-fishing trip, I sensed our relationship was approaching a milestone.

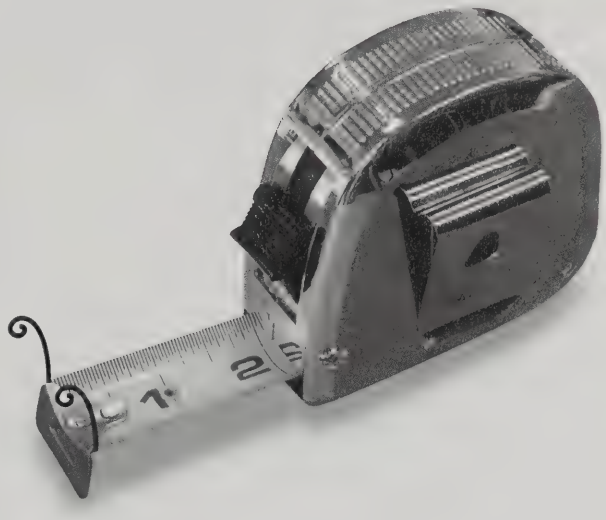
To prepare, I sought out two angler friends. One gave me a rudimentary lesson in fly casting. The other got me outfitted at Orvis. Both said I did not deserve it.

Nothing could have prepared me for the scenery. As our four-wheel-drive caravan snaked up the West Coast from Reykjavik, long vistas unrolled over black lava fields, stippled with silver-green moss. Our destination, the Vidaldalsa River, stretched south from a jagged fjord on the Arctic Circle. Along its banks, gurgling waterfalls sliced through grassy mounds, sheep dotted the fields, and glaciers hunched in the distance.

A silvery salmon, backlit by strong sun, arched out of the river at about 10:00 PM. I landed him 20 minutes later. "First one?" queried our guide as my client rushed over to inspect my catch. "Well then," he continued as he slid two fingers through the gills and lifted the twisting fish out of the water, "you'll have to bite off the dorsal fin!"

My companions cheered at the crackling of the spiny web between my teeth. The backslaps that followed marked a milestone in client relations, but neither they nor 20-odd years of practice made it any easier to swallow. ■■■

John W. Cole AIA is a principal of Arrowstreet in Somerville, Massachusetts. He is the partner-in-charge of the firm's work in Iceland, including Starlight Square which recently won the International Council of Shopping Center's 2001 European Design Award.



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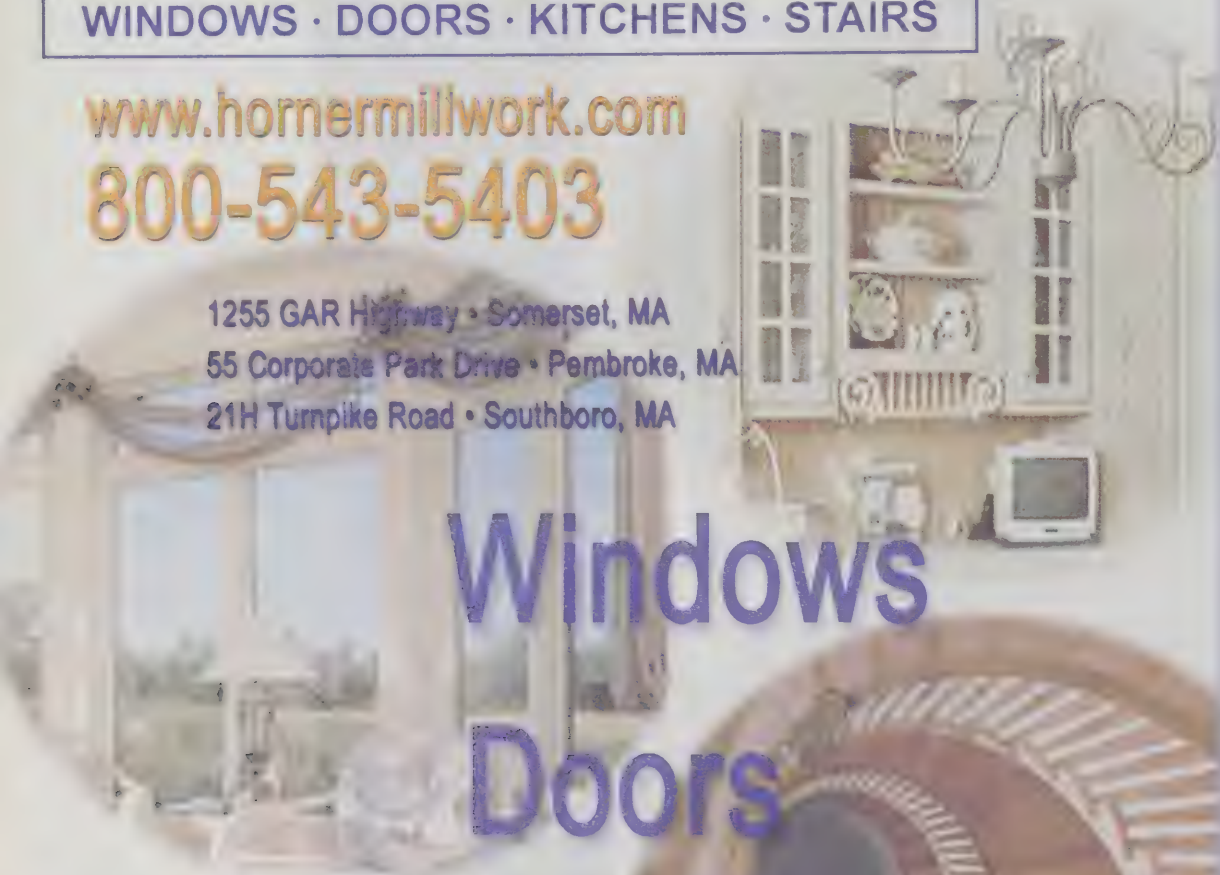
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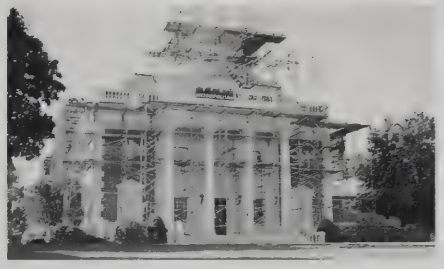


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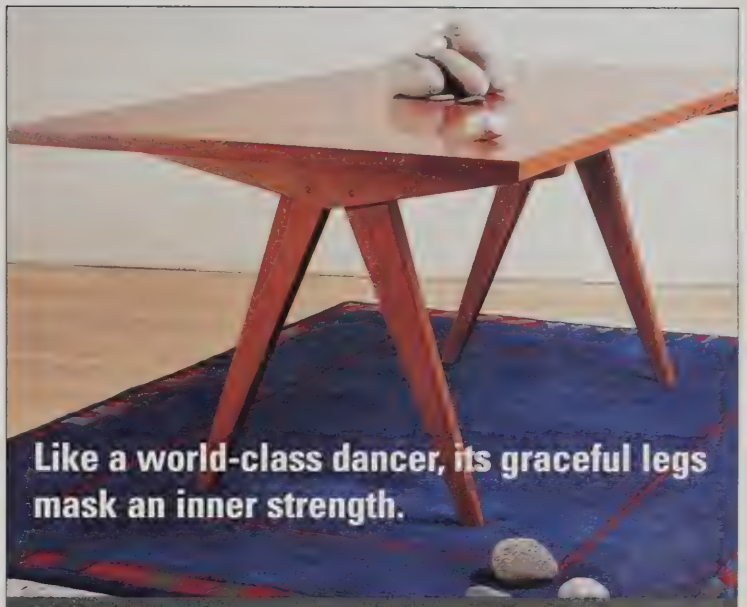
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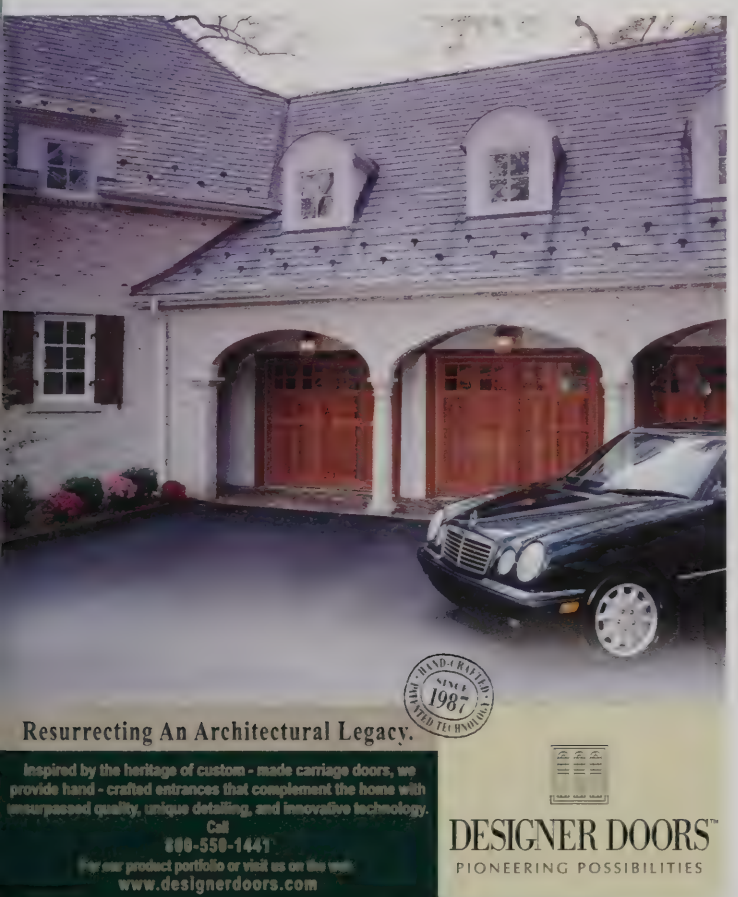
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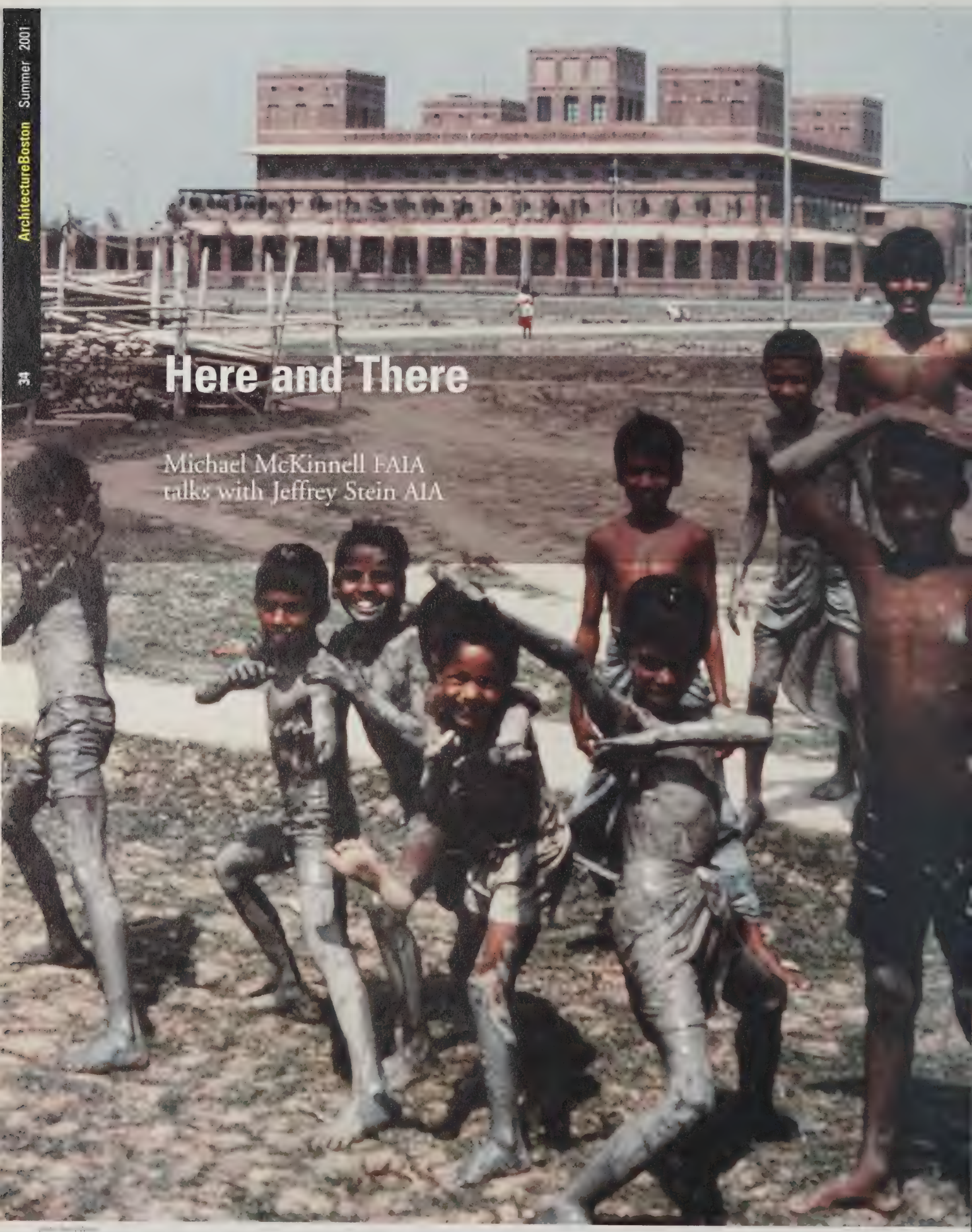
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Here and There

Michael McKinnell FAIA
talks with Jeffrey Stein AIA

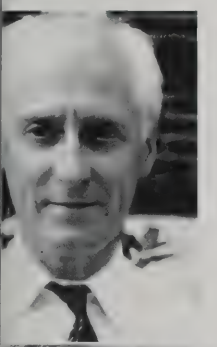




photo: Patrice Fleisch

Top:
Michael McKinnell FAIA

Bottom:
Jeffrey Stein AIA

Left:
Children at play in front of the United States Chancery in Dhaka
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects

N. Michael McKinnell FAIA is a founding principal of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects in Boston, which was honored as the AIA Firm of the Year in 1984. A native of Salford, England, he came to the United States on a Fulbright scholarship in 1959. He and his partner Gerhard Kallmann FAIA first received international recognition for their design of the Boston City Hall; later Boston-area projects include the Boston Five Cents Savings Bank, the Hynes Convention Center, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Shad Hall at the Harvard Business School. The firm's recent international work includes projects in Bangladesh, Thailand, Singapore, and the Netherlands. He is a professor of architecture at MIT.

Jeffrey Stein AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker + Tradesman* and professor of architecture at Wentworth Institute of Technology, where he teaches design and sustainability. He has also taught at Wentworth's program in France. He recently served as Commissioner of Education for the BSA.

Stein: You and your buildings are so ingrained in the Boston architectural community that it takes a moment to remember that you came here from another country. Given all the choices that were available to you as a young English architect, what brought you here?

McKinnell: Actually, there weren't many choices. After I finished my five-year university course in architecture at Manchester, I was fortunate enough to be asked to stay on at the university to pursue some research for a year. I was asked to research the "Commissioner's Churches" — churches that were built rather cheaply during the Industrial Revolution under the auspices of a commission to provide for the spiritual services of the burgeoning populations of industrial towns. These churches, at least from my scant research, are without exception ugly, mean, and unattractive. I was rather lazy by disposition, so I stayed on at Manchester for a year in this capacity, and during that time, I met a lot of my classmates who had graduated with me and gone on to practice. As time wore on, I realized that what they described to me as their everyday life was not very appealing. The only way I could avoid that was to stay in academe, and the only way I could do that was to be financed, and the only place I could be financed was in America. And so I applied for a number of fellowships and scholarships at various universities in the United States. I was offered at least two, one at Columbia University and one at MIT.

In England, I had no idea of what the American universities were like, but being as all Englishmen are, a terrible snob, I thought an "institute of technology" didn't sound as prestigious as a university. Columbia was in New York, and as I was very interested in jazz at the time, I thought this would give me a splendid opportunity to listen to jazz. So I chose Columbia.

Stein: Did you imagine that you would become an American, or did you think in terms of getting a graduate degree and returning to England?

McKinnell: I didn't think in those terms at all. I thought day by day, sometimes week by week, but never more than that. And everything happened serendipitously. I stayed on at Columbia to assist Gerhard Kallmann in teaching first-year students. We decided that no one was building the kind of architecture to which we were referring our students, and that we should build some examples ourselves. This was, of course, terribly pretentious of us. Gerhard, who is 20 years older than I am, believed that competitions were the way young architects could get their start. Competitions were not very popular in America at that time, but as luck would have it, virtually the next week, the competition for the City

Hall in Boston was announced, and we decided that we would enter that. And to our extraordinary surprise and joy, we won. That's how things started. We moved to Boston, and I've been here ever since.

Stein: What was the city like at that time?

McKinnell: It was a wonderful city, but in many respects, it was not the city it is now. At that time, Boston was in considerable decline, and there were intimations that very important commercial enterprises and industries were contemplating leaving town. When we first came up here, there was no restaurant other than the Ritz to celebrate our victory. One would stroll around Boston in those days, and if one heard a foreign language, one would look around to see who was speaking it. Now, of course, one walks down Newbury Street and hears almost every language under the sun. There's been an extraordinary change in the city's development since 1963.

Stein: The new City Hall was intended to symbolize a new vision of Boston, and so your status — essentially, an outsider — was considered an important aspect of the project.

McKinnell: There's a story to that. There was a wonderful man in Boston by the name of Jim Lawrence. Jim was an architect and an aristocrat, and he was very much concerned with good works. It was he who had persuaded the city — I believe somewhat against their initial wishes — to hold a competition for the City Hall in order to break the pattern of political patronage, which at that time was rife in Boston. It's really due to Jim Lawrence that this City Hall came about and I'm in Boston.

Stein: In the Middle Ages, a monk named Hugh of St. Victor said this: "I was a foreigner. I met you in a strange land, but that land was not really strange, for I found friends there. I don't know whether I first made friends or was made one, but I found love there, and I loved it, and I could not tire of it, for it was sweet to me, and I filled my heart with it and was sad that my heart could hold so little." Is that what happened to you once you were in Boston?

McKinnell: Yes. Yes. Yes. I must get a copy of that.

Stein: How long did it take for you to feel at home here?

McKinnell: I suppose I've always felt at home in Boston, and I've never felt at home in Boston. My children are Americans and regard Boston as their home in every sense. I don't believe that immigrants ever in their lifetime feel entirely at home in the place that they've chosen. The memories from childhood are too strong.

Stein: Robert Campbell once said that your buildings "disdained charm." I sense that your earlier buildings disdained charm more than your more recent ones, and I wonder if that has to do with you yourself becoming more comfortable with this place. And I wonder by extension what the role of comfort is in your buildings.

McKinnell: That's actually a very searching question. Comfort for the user of one's buildings should be of paramount concern to the architect. But then one has to define comfort. At one level, comfort can be interpreted as charm, a perhaps superficial delight of the eye and the body. I think a better word than comfort is "propriety." There is an inappropriateness in public environments, for example, that present themselves as if they were private homes with all the "comfort" that one expects to find in a private home. It is more appropriate for such buildings to provide psychological comfort through their propriety, rather than to provide immediate bodily comfort through other attributes.

Stein: How self-conscious have you been in your response to the Boston building tradition? And how overtly have you tried to show a direction for how it could be altered?

McKinnell: Well, there are two parts to that question. One is, have I tried? And the second part is, have I been successful? I think my firm has always attempted to derive some generative forces for the design from the conditions in which we are working — whether that's working in Boston or in Bangkok. Have we been successful? I think it's much more likely that one will succeed in an environment in which one lives than in an environment one is merely visiting. Inevitably, the dirt from the city that you live in gets underneath your fingernails and becomes part of you.

Stein: You've worked recently in Bangkok, Singapore, and Bangladesh. This seems to be part of a larger international trend. Are clients in other countries seeking out American designers as a way of modernizing, making themselves more alive to Western culture? What do they get from American architecture that they can't get from their own architects?

McKinnell: There was a time when what they were seeking was competence and experience. There was a time when there was a disparity between what could be produced locally and what American firms could offer. I don't believe that those disparities exist today, at least not nearly to the degree that they existed in, say, the 1960s. So I'm not quite sure why people seek architects from other countries. I suppose in some instances it is to receive the signature of a famous or fashionable architect. But these days, this is working the other way around as well. More and more famous Japanese and European architects are working in America. I suppose that represents the general trend towards globalization and the specific trend towards high-fashion and high-profile signature work by high-fashion and high-profile architects.

Stein: Approximately 15 percent of the architecture students in this country are actually citizens of other countries. Among your students at MIT, would you say that percentage is about right?

McKinnell: I think it's considerably more than that.

Stein: Do these students bring something special to your class, or do they need a kind of attention that is special?

McKinnell: Both. One of the excitements for me is to listen to the students from other countries and to attempt to understand the cultural background from which they come. Something that I worry about when I go home at night after class is the extent to which I am responsible for warping, even polluting, their cultural origins through the instruction that we give in architecture. I don't think there's anything one can do about that — one just has to do one's best. But it's something that worries me about the general trend towards homogeneity and globalization and the lack of differentiation in architecture — it gets back to the question you raised before. Why are so many of us working all over the world, where we don't, in a sense, belong? The dark side of that concern is to be accused of a kind of culturally colonial attitude — oh, they're different over there, and we should keep them different in spite of their interests. It's very dangerous to suggest that one knows what another culture should be or to suggest that it should be frozen or that it should reflect what we imagine it should be in our fantasies.

Stein: There must be some glories, however, about working in another country or passing on your knowledge and experience to people from another culture.

McKinnell: It's much more the other way around. The excitement is in learning from another environment, learning from another culture, and attempting to inform one's work with that knowledge, however superficial it might be. I think we get much more out of it than they do.

Stein: You worked on the design of the US Chancery in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Was that project considered to represent an outpost of US culture? Or was it intended to respond to the cultural forces of Bangladesh?

McKinnell: Embassies are a rather particular example of work in the international sphere, because an American embassy is technically considered American soil. So in a very esoteric way, an embassy represents, not the host country, but the home country. And in a very practical way, it has to provide accommodation for increasingly complicated technologies and security requirements. There's an enormous impetus to respond to those issues rather than to the nature of the environment, the host country, into which this piece of America is being placed. But in its design and construction, it can reflect the techniques of the local building culture. In Dhaka, for instance, the temperature is very, very high every day, with occasionally very heavy rains. The building must provide comfort for its users, the members of the diplomatic corps, and also for the people from the local country who come to that embassy for whatever reason. I think embassy buildings should be a dialogue between the local conditions — cultural, technical, environmental conditions — and the programmatic, operational, and symbolic requirement that this be a piece of America. So they're intriguing commissions. Unfortunately, of course, American embassies have been subject to these horrendous, vicious, and mindless attacks for political purposes, and the State Department has quite understandably instituted a standard of security for their buildings in order to protect the American diplomats. It's very difficult to meet these security requirements and also make decent architecture.

Nanyang Technological University
Republic of Singapore
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects



photo: Richard Bryant

Stein: Have you developed a process — a way of designing and building and exploring — that is somewhat universal, that is consistent wherever you are working?

McKinnell: One doesn't change the way one works, but I think one attempts to shorten one's antennae while working away from home. In a strange, new environment, one attempts to become more aware of those things that one understands by intuition and experience at home.

Stein: That suggests an interesting aspect to your career here in Boston. Your response to that sense of "strangeness" that you may have perceived early on may be why you won the Boston City Hall competition and why you're here — you brought another sensibility to this city.

McKinnell: I can't really answer that because I don't know what the jury read into our design. We were interested in some specifically Bostonian references. For us, the lower portion of the building, clad in brick, was the foothill to Beacon Hill. The plaza was in fact Beacon Hill rolling down towards Congress Street. We were also very interested in issues that had to do with our great enthusiasm at that time for the democratic political process — this was in the flush of the Kennedy era. There was a general excitement and faith in the beneficence of government and what it could do, and the building design was in my view imbued with that enthusiasm and faith, the sense that democratic government was an ongoing process which would never be finished. And so the building itself was conceived by us as an armature, a framework, which would be, we hoped, invested by subsequent generations of Bostonians with their own marks and their own decoration, and their own embellishment. It was conceived to be a very rugged building, because we thought democracy was a rugged idea, and it was conceived to be a building that was the start of something, not the finish of something — rather like a medieval city hall, begun and then embellished over time just as buildings of the past have been.



United States Embassy
Bangkok
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood
Architects

Stein: Not very much time has elapsed, actually, but it's entirely possible that some embellishments will come to that building.

McKinnell: I really hope so. I think it would start to fulfill what for us was the promise of the building. We have been much criticized, and in some instances correctly, for making the building out of raw concrete, for not providing for the comfort of the occupants of the building — comfort in the larger sense of the word. But we regarded it as the construction of a scaffolding — an armature, a skeleton — which could then be fleshed out over time. To achieve that potential richness at that time was, first of all, impossible on the budget. But we also believed that it was inappropriate to present a finished work to the citizens of Boston. It should be for the citizens to finish and leave their mark on the building.

Stein: What are some of the things that you are still interested in exploring in your work?

McKinnell: As I get a bit older, I'm less interested in novelty. I'm not interested in what Robert Hughes described in his book *The Shock of the New.* The important issues seem fewer and fewer as one gets older as an architect. I'm more and more interested in crystallizing some of the issues that I think have always concerned me, issues that have always informed our architecture. I try to be a little bit more self-conscious about them, and I'm interested in new ways of responding to them.

Stein: A book about your firm, which was published in the 1980s, talked about your work as being about innovation and memory — which seemed to me only could only come from a certain maturity. And now you have even more of it.

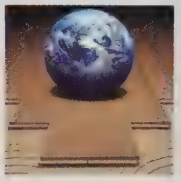
McKinnell: All architecture comes from architecture — that is memory. Innovation is the contribution by the architect to a tradition which precedes the architect by thousands of years, and one hopes, will live on. We, in the general scope of things, are tiny dots in a continuum that is extraordinary. And we are privileged to be able to contribute to it. ■■■



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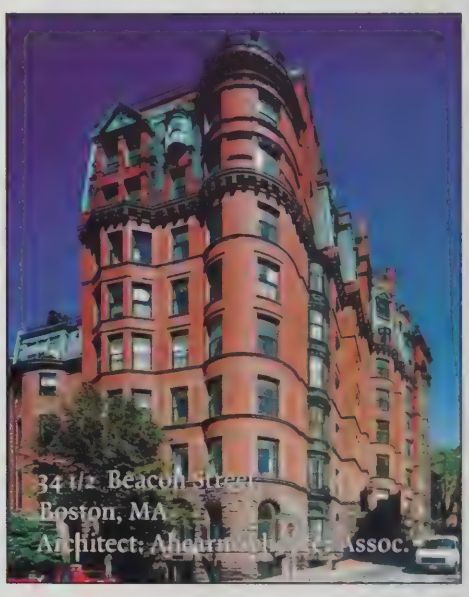
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Letter from Hong Kong

A part of China, apart from China

by Nelson Chen AIA, RIBA, HKIA



photo courtesy Pacific Century Publishers

Nelson Chen AIA, RIBA, HKIA, is principal of Nelson Chen Architects Ltd., recipient of numerous design awards including the 1999 Architecture Firm Award from the AIA Hong Kong chapter. An adjunct professor of architecture at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, he was a member of the BSA from 1980 to 1997, when he became a founding member of AIA Hong Kong. He returns to Boston on occasion as a member of the Visiting Committee to the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

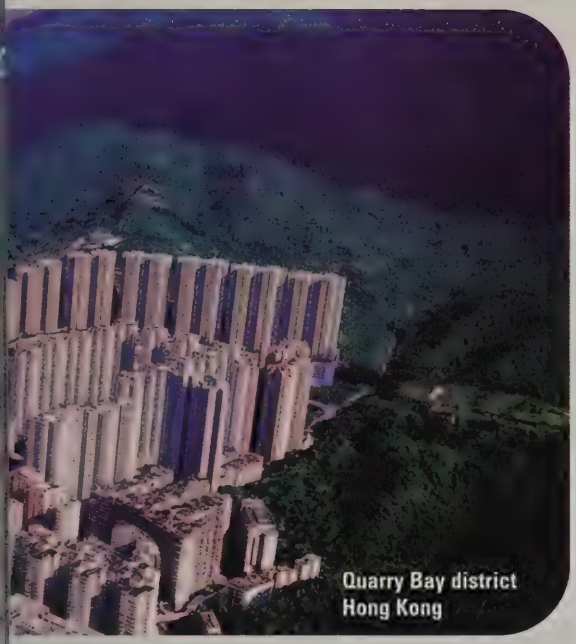
For several years, my wife, Margaret, and I enjoyed a typical academic lifestyle in Cambridge: an apartment near Harvard Square, a bus ride down Massachusetts Avenue to MIT for her, and an even shorter commute for me — across the road to Arrow Street where Graham Gund Architects had its original offices. It was a small cozy world for a newlywed couple who never thought it necessary to sever the umbilical cords from our respective alma maters.

But then we moved 12 time zones away to Hong Kong when my father-in-law passed away. He had been in the midst of building two pioneering residential developments — totalling more than 6,000 units — in the New Territories, near the border with China. As an architect, I was assigned the role of overseeing design and construction (I had sudden empathy for Kevin Roche when he was asked to carry on the legacy of Eero Saarinen), while Margaret inherited the responsibility of managing the community that would eventually grow to 25,000 residents. Although we had vowed to complete this work and return to Cambridge in "three or four years," it is now 15 years later.

Throughout this time, we have been witnesses to history as Hong Kong has weathered a torrent of political, economic, and social storms, never failing to display its resilience as both an urban and social phenomenon. Not the least of these was the historic return of the former British colony to mainland Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. (Thus, in common with the US, we enjoy a long holiday weekend each summer, although ours is more of a "Dependence Day.")

Actually, China deserves credit thus far for upholding its pledge to maintain Hong Kong's autonomy through the doctrine of "one country, two systems" introduced by Deng Xiaoping. Hong Kong is now a part of China, yet is still apart from China. Much of the local *status quo* is tolerated, including Cantonese dialect, traditional characters, and left-hand drive, while the rest of China is officially Mandarin-speaking, using simplified characters and right-hand drive. Even flights to Hong Kong from mainland China airports are still classified as "international departures." While there has undeniably been erosion in Hong Kong in some areas such as freedom of the press, this seems to originate more from self-censorship by local newspaper publishers who curry favor with the PRC government leadership than from direct interferenc from China.

Since 1997, the most significant threat faced by Hong Kong has been the regional downturn of the Asian economy, a recession that appears to be still a couple more years away from recovery, notwithstanding the expected ascension of China to the World Trade Organization. In the past three years, property prices have fallen about 40 percent to 50 percent, yet a recent property survey reveals that Hong Kong still leads the world at $55 per square foot — ahead of New York ($53) and London ($5 — for annual rentals of luxury residential properties. For commercial leases, office rentals in the central business district still reach $50 to $100 per square foot, despite the current recession.


Quarry Bay district
Hong Kong

ligh population density is accepted as a way of fe in Hong Kong, currently weighing in at pproximately 77,000 persons per square mile in ie urbanized areas. (Tokyo has18,000 per square ile and Boston has 3,000 per square mile.) What o the numbers mean? Think of shoppers on fth Avenue in New York City the week before hristmas and imagine that activity on every reet corner, and you have daily life in Hong Kong. And forget about finding on-street parking.)

his density creates extraordinary conditions. unney Lee — the MIT professor who was the unding head of the department of architecture at he Chinese University of Hong Kong — argues nvincingly that Le Corbusier's vision of high-rise uciform towers for public housing has been ccessfully implemented in Hong Kong, but not sewhere, because of this uniquely high population ensity.

the US, such public-housing developments, nown as "projects," have been isolated from their mmunities, forcing residents to leave the projects go to school, do their shopping, see movies. In ong Kong, it is the higher population density that pports community life *within* public-housing velopments: schools, clinics, cinemas, shopping, d services are all included within the housing states," as they are called here. While many of ese estates succeed in establishing a sense of ighborhood and providing integrated communal aces, the floor layouts and visual appearance of ese government-subsidized cruciform towers are ten numbingly repetitive on the urban landscape.

Another recent phenomenon in Hong Kong is the growing American presence. (And an increasing American influence: According to the American Institute of Architects, there are more US-trained architects in Hong Kong than in any other city outside the States.) The expatriate American community is one of the largest "foreign" groups in Hong Kong today; with more than 50,000 people, it outnumbers even the British expats. Several years ago, Margaret and I shopped at "USA & Co.," a specialty store for uniquely American products like pancake mix and cranberry juice. This store no longer exists — not due to lack of demand, but because of overwhelming competition from local supermarkets, all of which now stock Skippy peanut butter, Cap'n Crunch cereal, and other "delicacies" from America. The "Coca-colonization" of Hong Kong, China, and the rest of Asia is nearing total conquest.

While the cultural past still exists in Hong Kong, it is fast disappearing under relentless renovation and reconstruction. In fact, there is little that is really Chinese about Hong Kong. Most tourists end up visiting an exciting but essentially generic city: staying at hotels with CNN and MTV, taking a tram ride to the Peak, bargain-hunting for Nikes at Stanley Market. By 2005, they will also be able to visit Disneyland, now under early stages of construction.

When asked several years ago to reconcile his traditional design for Fragrant Hill Hotel near Beijing and his contemporary geometric masterpiece for the 70-story Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong, I.M. Pei observed that "there is a difference between working in Beijing and Hong Kong in that, culturally, the image of Beijing is Chinese and that of Hong Kong is international." But this, too, is rapidly changing as major cities on the mainland — especially Shanghai — are being dramatically transformed to look more like Hong Kong which, in turn, looks more and more like New York, with new towers designed by Cesar Pelli, Kohn Pedersen Fox, and Mitchell/Giurgola, among others.

At this rate, my wife and I may never have to return to the US. The US appears to be coming here. ■■■

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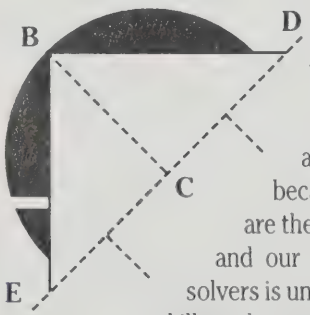
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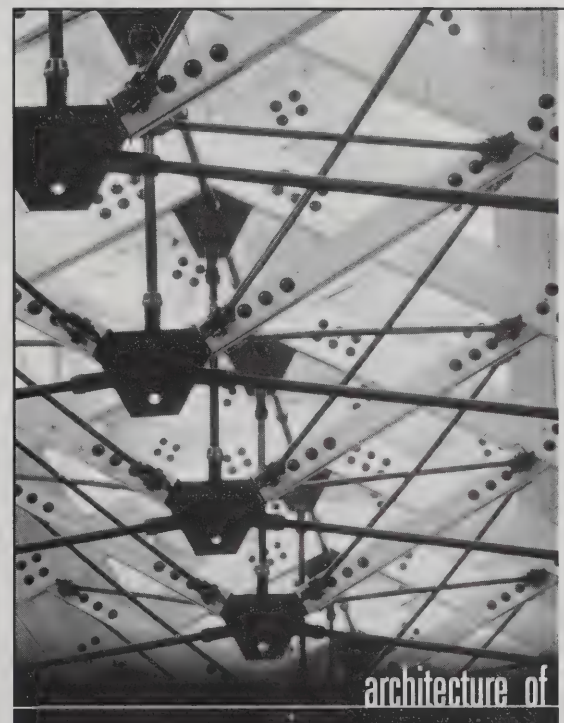
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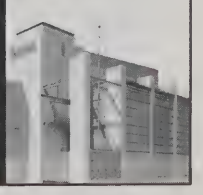
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The Kindness of Strangers

by Scott Simpson FAIA

At the dramatic conclusion of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche DuBois cries out, half in despair and half in relief, that she has always depended on the kindness of strangers. Those who are closest to us are often also the toughest on us; sometimes it takes an outsider to put things in perspective. This can also be said of the architecture of Boston, which is a city comprising related but distinctly different neighborhoods, not unlike the members of a large family. Blended together, the neighborhoods give Boston its strong identity — there is no mistaking it for Minneapolis, Atlanta, or Houston. The architecture is rooted in a unique blend of geography, history, and culture, resulting in a distinctive "sense of place" that is pervasive but not overbearing. Boston is a brick city, but it is not all brick. Boston has its own recognizable aesthetic and texture, but the buildings are not all the same size, shape, or style. In Boston, the proportion of "background" to "foreground" buildings, like Baby Bear's porridge, is neither too hot nor too cold…it is just right.

To what do we owe this good fortune? Boston's extraordinary tradition of great design stretches back several centuries and includes such legends as Charles Bulfinch, Henry Hobson Richardson, and Frederick Law Olmsted. Many of the city's architects and engineers trained locally and absorbed their lessons in civic place-making by osmosis. We can also credit Boston's decades-old public design-review process — frustrating, slow, and costly though it may be, it ensures that architectural awareness is embedded in the public consciousness. And while we're at it, let's also thank the "bungee jumpers" — those brand-name designers who are occasionally imported to dazzle the locals.

This last category may raise an eyebrow or two. Who among local architects does not take a little umbrage when a prize commission goes to an out-of-towner, one who may not be as familiar as we would like with local customs, codes, or civic sensitivities? Why, we might righteously ask, is there a need to import an outsider to design our modern landmarks such as the Fleet Center, the Convention Center, or Fenway Park? After all, it would seem cost-effective and easier to turn to a "member of the family."

It's a good question, but there is a good answer. First, let's consider what we mean by "local architects." Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell are world-renowned as "Boston architects," but they began their careers here as upstart foreigners (one German, the other British), winning the City Hall design competition against long odds. Walter Gropius, another German expatriate, and Josep Lluis Sert, a Spaniard, trained generations of "Boston architects" at Harvard, but neither was a native New Englander. And, of course, many "Boston architects" are immigrants from other states. Thus, when speaking of "local talent" we should be careful to define our terms.

In fact, Boston is nothing if not a place made by immigrants, starting with the Pilgrims. Part of what makes it a world-class city is world-class architecture by world-class talent, and by definition that talent does not all reside within Route 128. We are blessed to have notable buildings by Rafael Moneo (Davis Art Museum, Wellesley College), Frank Gehry (Tower Records), I.M. Pei (Christian Science complex), Adrian Smith (Rowes Wharf), Philip Johnson (International Place), Paul Rudolph (Lindemann Center), Eero Saarinen (Kresge Chapel and Auditorium), Alvar Aalto (Baker House). None of these architects was Boston-based. Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center is supremely insensitive to local conditions, aesthetics, and climate. Uncomfortably squeezed between the Harvard's Faculty Club and the Fogg Museum, it looks like an uninvited guest, but it stretches our notion of what buildings can be, and we are richer for it.

This is not to say that all architectural imports have been successful. Minoru Yamasaki's William James Hall at Harvard is a real dud — just as iconoclastic as the Carpenter Center down the street, but with no sense of scale, purpose or grace. It seems to have been mailed to the wrong address and abandoned at the doorstep. And James Stirling's Sackler Museum also falls flat. The exterior — clumsy, badly scaled, without detail — is in odd contrast with its elegant contents. (And this was done when Stirling was at the height of his creative powers.)

While considering Boston's imports, let's not forget the exports as well. Boston is known world-wide for its extraordinarily talented and influential designers. Frederick Law Olmsted's genius spawned Central Park and the Stanford campus.

Landmark Tower
Yokohama, Japan

The Stubbins Associates,
Design Architect



Photo courtesy Mitsubishi Estate Co

Henry Hobson Richardson's work was prolific and widely influential. Hugh Stubbins and William LeMessurier invented a new kind of skyscraper at Citicorp Center in New York — one of the most innovative and recognizable buildings in the world. Ben Thompson created the "urban festival marketplace" first at Quincy Market and later brought the concept to New York, Baltimore, Washington, DC, and other cities. Carl Koch pioneered the "adaptive re-use" movement and the waterfront renaissance with the renovation of Lewis Wharf. Under the leadership of Walter Gropius, The Architects Collaborative was an early pioneer in team-based design and became the "finishing school" for dozens of leading international architects. Cambridge Seven demonstrated how major aquariums could revitalize waterfronts in cities around the world. In short, Boston has been as much an exporter as an importer of design talent, and so any complaints about the invasion of "foreigners" should be tempered by a close look at our balance of trade.

In fact, if we're lucky, Boston will get more imports, not fewer, and we can already look forward to more prominent visitors: Norman Foster (Museum of Fine Art), Frank Gehry (MIT), Rafael Viñoly (Convention Center), and Hans Hollein (Harvard) all have projects in the pipeline. Can Santiago Calatrava, Tadao Ando, Michael Graves, or Richard Meier be far behind? Should they?

Boston is a city of immigrants and traders; its energy and its future depend equally upon imports and exports. Both the professional design community and the public are lucky to attract world-class architects — this makes for a better place. The miracle is that Boston can absorb all this talent without losing its soul. We are indeed blessed by the kindness of strangers. ■■■

Scott Simpson FAIA is a principal of The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Architects.



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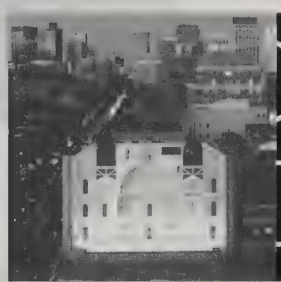
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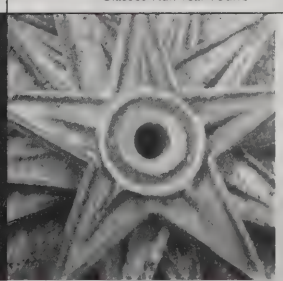


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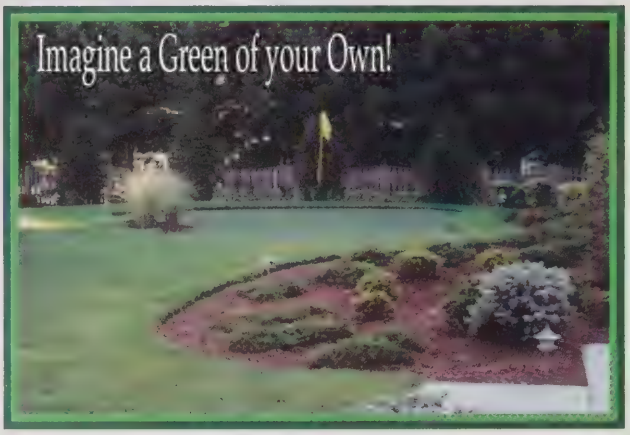
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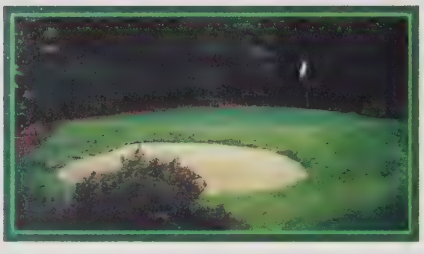
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Covering the Issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA



Gender bender... Hailed as "the first woman who can hold her own in...an old man's profession," *Talk* (April 2001) profiles Baghdad-born, London-based architect Zaha Hadid. Titled simply "Zaha" (like Madonna or Cleopatra), author Charles Gandee describes his subject's brilliant paintings, architectural passion, designer capes, temperamental tantrums, and uncompromising ideals. A post-feminist Frank Lloyd Wright. Gandee writes that "for perhaps the first time," architectural heavy-hitters Gehry, Eisenman, Isozaki, Tschumi, and Koolhaas "were forced to acknowledge a member of the opposite sex as a professional peer." Which leads this writer to ask, how long will gender be an issue? Would *Talk* be writing if Zaha weren't female? On one hand, this is a lengthy, intelligent, well-researched story of one architect's struggle to launch an avant-garde practice. A noteworthy accomplishment in a national gossip magazine. Yet the gender question keeps recurring. Gandee calls Hadid's Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati the "first major art museum in America to be designed by a woman." "I do not think of myself as a 'woman' architect," comments Hadid. If only others thought the same.

Big Brother's asking... Did you read Tony Lester's fascinating cover story in March 2001's *Atlantic Monthly* on "The Reinvention of Privacy"? No need to respond — someone, somewhere, probably knows the answer. Now that virtually anyone can virtually observe our most private moves via the Internet, credit cards, or skin-embedded computer chips — what is "privacy" in the Information Age? Lester searches out companies who design "the privacy space," yet they're not making physical places. Still, they (and their "architects") use our language of "foundations," "fire-walls," "leaks," and "transparency." Have we finally witnessed the full transformation from privacy as a spatial phenomenon to a technological one?



Underwater world... With nearly half of their country below sea level, the Dutch understand water. So it might be reasonable that an entrepreneurial Dutch company, WaterNet, claims to have invented a revolutionary method to transport Internet data through existing water pipes. In "Digital Canals" (*Red Herring*, no. 94), Andrew P. Madden reports on this innovative project, known by the acronym "DRIP." Madden explains that municipal water authorities will become "information hubs." By attaching a "client-side nozzle" to a standard water faucet, individual consumers will have Internet access "as long as the faucet is on." Satellites will globally link separate city systems. For you disbelievers, trials are currently underway in Belgium. WaterNet boasts its technology will be cheap, simple, and capable of unlimited bandwidth — something no existing telecommunications network can claim. If successful, standard "water utilities will be transformed into communications providers." Talk about infrastructure! Talk about innovative adaptive re-use!

Shelter extra, C.O.D... First designer jeans, then designer kids' clothes, now designer dwellings. In "Castle in a Box" (*The New Yorker*, March 26, 2001), David Brooks writes about "tract-housing developments for millionaires." Brooks argues that during the last Gilded Age, moguls "mimic[ked] the manners of their social superiors," building faux hunting lodges and Renaissance palaces as if they were the noble sort leaving the crass commercial world behind. Today, commercial is king. "Many of the grandest moguls now prefer to write a check for a prefab palace...A new millionaire can walk through one of the models and purchase exactly what he sees, down to the furniture, the bath towels, and the silverware." Claims the leading developer: "'Nobody has the time to go through the brain damage of working with an architect and trying to figure out what you want.'" Therefore, models (and life) come ready-to-order in four styles: "Italian," "French Country," "New York Loft," and "Ralph Lauren."

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches architecture at Smith College.

Books

A Field Guide to the Global Economy

by Sarah Anderson *et al.*
New Press, 2000

reviewed by
Matthew Ali

The impact of globalization on the design profession is hard to quantify. Most architects do not complain of losing a contract to a Third World office, nor do they harbor armies of illegal labor, regardless of what interns say. An understanding, however, of how global trends influence regional economies could aid architects in predicting market direction as well as raising social and ecological awareness.

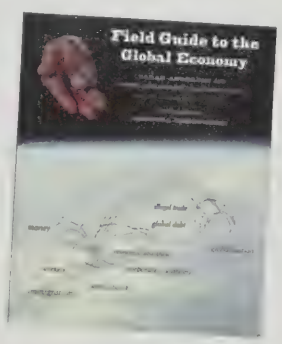
A Field Guide to the Global Economy is an introduction to the world of transnational corporations, their influence on governmental policy, and the adverse effects of these private interests on workers and the environment. Designed to aid discussions with "friends, colleagues, and family members," this small book has the character of an accessible grassroots handbook, something between an academic text and an activist 'zine. Published in conjunction with The Institute for Policy Studies, the book is written from a left-of-center point of view that we do not often see fully articulated in mass media. Given this position, the book is ideal for those interested in labor, environmental, and fair-trade issues, who are looking for a way to actively oppose global corporations' interests. The other group this book targets is those listeners of the BBC World Service and readers of *The Economist* who would like to brush up on the strategy behind the daily tactics.

The strongest asset the book has to offer the reader is the presentation of the major players — an introduction of acronyms (IoA?). WTO, GATT, IMF are familiar territory for most — but what of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), TRIM (Trade Related Investment Measures) and MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment)? The book also outlines the corporate coalitions, business associations, and corporate thinktanks that push pro-globalization legislation. Recent world events such as the NAFTA debate are used to study how these players lobbied lawmakers and the public. Massachusetts residents will find the references to state legislation regarding trade with Burma interesting. And part-time environmentalists will find confirmation for their anti-corporate philosophy.

The laudable objective of the book and its sound collection of facts are somewhat undermined by a graphic design that misses an opportunity to present the information in an exciting and accessible way. Unnecessary halftones, clip-art clichés (37 toy-globe images!), and irrational font and type-size selection obscure what the text strives to clarify. The lack of an index or glossary, possibly to make room for an excellent "directory of organizations," is also disappointing.

Whether your goal is to alter the direction of globalization or — perhaps more realistically — just to understand it, this text is an admirable introduction to a complex, rapidly changing subject. ■■■

Matthew Ali is a designer with Ellenzweig Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Mollie's Job

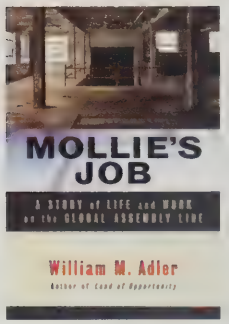
by William M. Adler
Scribner, 2000

reviewed by
Suzanne de Monchaux

Mollie's company produced the ballasts that regulate the flow of current into fluorescent lights. The first female union steward, and among the first African-American stewards, Mollie lost her job of 36 years when her family-owned company in Paterson, New Jersey, through a series of acquisitions by increasingly remote owners, finally lost its original identity in a move to Matamoros on the Mexican border. In moves spurred unabashedly by the search for low costs, high profits, compliant employees, and low union activity, the job fell first to another African-American woman in Mississippi and then to a Mexican woman desperate enough to work under appalling conditions for 64 cents an hour. (Mollie, thanks to union activity, had been earning $8.)

Essential subplots cover union infighting and corruption and iniquitous responses to the Civil Rights Act, but the underlying dynamic of Adler's sobering book is to reveal some of the human costs of globalization. It tells how the security and confidence bestowed by a job become precarious as technologies and growing free-trade — despite their undoubted benefits — make the movement of work into lower-cost environments more profitable and therefore more likely.

Adler offers little commentary and we are left to make our own observations. Two are relevant here. First, the devastating effect on Paterson poses the question of how such towns can be helped to surmount with dignity the spiraling deterioration that, in a changing and increasingly footloose economy, will continue to accompany job obsolescence and mobility. The brave efforts that some abandoned industrial towns have made to rise from such ashes have required enormous political will and commitment of resources; and their physical outcomes —



despite revenue-producing advantages — often convey an uncomfortable cuteness and a sense of architectural violation.

Secondly, it is primarily production jobs such as Mollie's that are mobile. Professional service work such as that performed by architects cannot be moved about in the same way. But even architects can and do exploit access to cheap labor. Modern technologies allow construction documents to be produced in low-cost areas, leading often to a time-saving 24-hour workday.

Perhaps a more serious aspect of globalization, however, is the long-term responsibility of professionals seeking to expand into the growing markets of the developing world itself, and the cultural insensitivity that too often accompanies such efforts. A respectful and sensitive approach would be to ensure a more deliberate nurturing of local skills and abilities and a responsive use of local knowledge, to make local professionals true partners in local opportunities. It would be a noble cause, but the growing outrage at the exploitation of women and children in developing countries and the increasing demand for equitable wages and humane working conditions are hopeful signs of a movement for change. ■■■

Suzanne de Monchaux is a consultant in behavioral science and social planning and is a research affiliate in the department of architecture at MIT.

uilt in Boston: City and uburb, 1800-2000

y Douglass Shand-Tucci
niversity of Massachusetts
ress, 2000

viewed by
illiam Morgan

ouglass Tucci's *Built in Boston, 800-1940* was a pioneering study hen it appeared in 1978. It ought to light the careers of nportant but ignored 19th-ntury architects (such as Edmund heelwright and Clarence ackall); it discussed overlooked ilding types including theaters d triple-deckers; and it included e suburbs.

ne University of Massachusetts ess has reissued *Built in Boston* in perback with four additonal apters on what the author aintly but inaccurately calls the Moderns." There are new knowledgments ("Intellectual citements do not suffice, wever, and for the logistical pport without which no book, I ust thank, above all, the woman nonymous by her wish), who es my word processing") and dication ("To one only will I tell "). But the new material on the t 60 years disappoints. Now orphed into the pretentious hand-Tucci," the author himself ys it best: "evidence perhaps, that ople like me should not write terwards like this! But I digress — d persist."

is production is horrendously vful. Many of the plates are urky, the expanded material is t indexed, and the copy editing inexcusably sloppy. Opinions ide, one expects correct spelling proper names in a purportedly holarly endeavor: Charles Jencks Christopher, Carl Koch rmanicizes into Karl, the chitect of Quincy Market is lexander Paris, the Pritzker Prize Pritzger, and embarrassingly on Richard Meir, Rem Koolhaus, d Andrea Lears. The back cover uts Shand-Tucci's book on abella "Stuart Gardener."



Shand-Tucci writes in an annoyingly convoluted Dickensian style ("A latecomer to architecture at mid-life, who after Yale College and Harvard Law School and some years as a lawyer, bolted his life, so to speak, in middle age to study architecture at M.I.T., [William] Rawn is a very attractive, articulate guy, albeit earnest to a fault, and very much a loner who holds the design initiative closely"). But the verbiage does not mask all the mistakes — such as spelling Chandigarh incorrectly and ascribing it to Gropius. Alvar Aalto did not design a Villa Maias, nor was he ever anti-American. Louis Kahn and Frank Gehry are not Boston architects.

Shand-Tucci abandons any pretense of objectivity (of the Hancock Tower's place in history: "I bought my Back Bay condo for its view of the Hancock"). His exegesis of "four old friends and true: Bostonians all now" — Warren Schwartz, Robert Silver, Rodolfo Machado, and Jorge Silvetti — is nauseatingly sycophantic. This quartet, we are informed, have shared Christmas dinner for decades, a tidbit mentioned solely to remind us of the author's putative insider status.

Perhaps appropriate to what Shand-Tucci calls our "post-Bilboa era," such narcissism ("unrepetent æsthete that I am") is more gossip than scholarship. Alas, the good qualities of the original *Built in Boston* have been pimped for this self-indulgent remake. ■■■

William Morgan teaches architectural history at Roger Williams University. His masters thesis and doctoral dissertation were about Boston architects.

The Color of Cities: An International Perspective

by Lois Swirnoff
McGraw-Hill, 2000

reviewed by
Charles Redmon FAIA

What an original and fascinating way to look at city form and character: to dissect the built environment through the lens of color and light. Linking the perception of color to the incidence of light, Lois Swirnoff (who is also a brilliant photographer) takes us on a richly illustrated journey to many of the major urban centers of the Northern Hemisphere. Her thesis is that the color of urban environments is directly linked to the differing angle at which the sun's rays hit the earth's surface. The steeper the angle (closest to the equator), the more intense the use of bright, saturated colors reflecting this brilliant light; and the shallower the angle, the greater the prevalence of softer, more subtle colors.

The book is organized as a series of written and photographic essays. These anecdotal travelogues tour different latitudes, focusing upon the impact of location, light, and shadow, and are coupled with descriptions of the elements of streetscape, façades, and building materials. When the text and images are tightly interlocked and developed, the book's thesis is clearly and forcefully presented. The author's description of how the colors of natural materials (such as in the temple at Segesta in Sicily) change from light to shade, transforming into complementary hues through the seasons and times of day, richly illustrates her message. And her description of the change in the color of the ocean through the seasons and with proximity to the earth's equator also conveys a powerful message about the angle-of-light's impact upon regional colors.

On the other hand, much of the book is disjointed and fragmented. The Italian tour of "cities of light" (Venice, Rome, Florence, Siena), the low-latitude survey of "regions of light"(Mexico, the Caribbean, Israel, Southern California), and the discussion of "median cities" (Paris, New York, Boston) and "cities in shadow" (London, Stockholm, Copenhagen) are cryptic and unevenly reinforce the book's theme. While the photos and text beautifully present a lesson in color worthy of Joseph Albers or of the Bauhaus, the book comes off as a disconnected travelogue short on content development. The balance of the book repeats earlier city visits through staccato vignettes of streets, façades, doorways, markets, and building details. The last photo spread is a visual delight, grouping colors and cities.

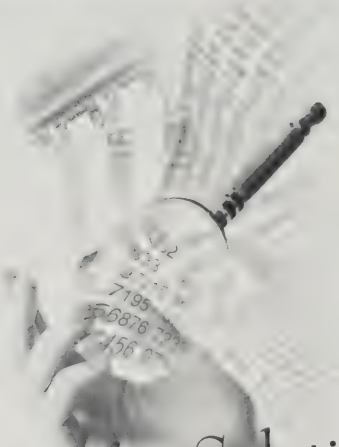
Lois Swirnoff undertook a difficult thesis, linking solar positioning to urban colors. At the same time she rightfully discusses all the other factors that shape the character, form, and color of urban places: city plan and design; vernacular expressions; local traditions; building materials; natural setting; growth and change; people and personalities; and cultural heritage. In the final analysis, it is really this amalgam of influences that shapes and forms urban places. But looking at all these factors through her colored looking glass is certainly worth the journey. ■■■

Charles Redmon FAIA is a principal of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a former president of the Boston Society of Architects.





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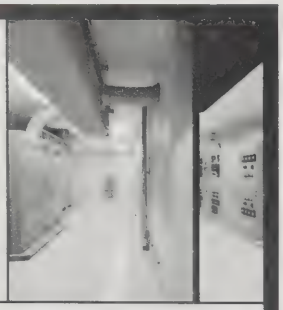
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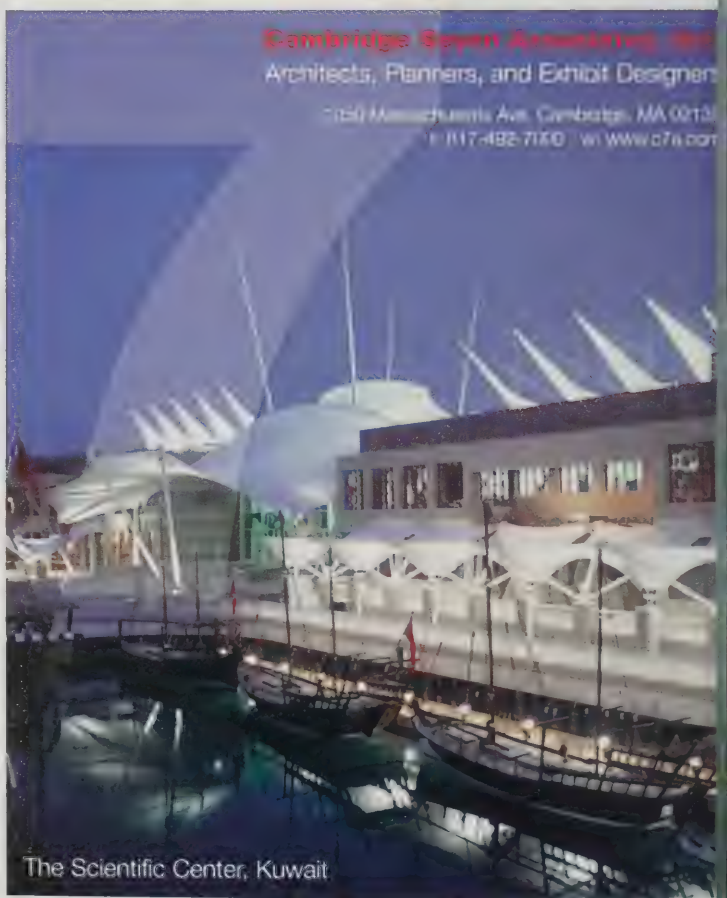
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Web sites of note

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www.archined.nl
Netherlands Architectural Institute
www.nai.nl

Aaron Betsky, former curator of design at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, recently left Baghdad by the Bay to become the new director of the NAI. Clearly, he knows something you don't. Check out the Dutch architecture scene from the comfort of your Aeron.

o2
www.o2.org

Self-described as a "blast of fresh air," this international network of sustainability advocates promotes respect for the environment. "Anarchic yet cooperative," it offers some good links. It also offers some annoying sound effects; beware, office surfers!

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts
www.pem.org

The Peabody Essex was founded in 1799 by some of the nation's first global entrepreneurs — the Salem merchants and sea captains who ventured to China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. Their never-matched genius for souvenir collecting is the basis for today's world-class multicultural museum.

ArchNet
www.archnet.org

Hosted by MIT and sponsored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, ArchNet is a sophisticated model for what the Internet can mean to the international architectural community. Serving designers, planners, students, and scholars with an interest in the Islamic world, it is a work in progress. But you can already find one of the few intelligent online architectural chat groups, terrific image archives, and some MIT course syllabi. Coming soon: digitized books.

The Architecture Room
www.thearchitectureroom.com

A straightforward, user-friendly British site that lists international competitions, including entry information, briefs, and past results. It also includes links to competition guidelines and advisory services by professional architectural associations.

Architects Index
www.architettura.it/architetti/index.htm

A simple list of links to architectural firms around the world. Visit your starchitect of choice: Calatrava, Grimshaw, Hadid, Piano. Prowl around and you can even find a button inviting you to *"discutez avec Andrée Putman!"*

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Other Voices by Johanna C. Richardson

The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts Harvard University



photo © Peter Vanderwarker

I have always been one to defend the works of art that are disparaged by those who make a habit of waxing nostalgic for the good ole days when everything was representational and easy to digest. I take it as a personal challenge to seek and explain beauty where others claim that none exists. Motivated by exclamations ("I could do that!") overheard when wandering about the 20th-century wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, I knew by the age of 16 that I wanted to study modern art once I got to college.

I have come to learn that this same beauty-proving impulse works for architecture as well.

I remember exploring Harvard Square in the fall of 1997 as a wide-eyed freshman with brand-new friends. Ambling down Quincy Street, we passed what I now know is the Carpenter Center. Its smooth concrete and non-conformist shape made it stand out from the surrounding brick buildings. We paused for a moment and looked up, awestruck — although the source of my wonder certainly was different from that of my companions. While they were shocked that the University would even consider building a non-brick, asymmetrical edifice within 20 feet of the beloved, picturesque Yard, I was dismayed that I had not known of this place beforehand. They exchanged disparaging comments. I was speechless.

I was determined to become better acquainted with the Carpenter Center.

Later that evening, I sneaked back, alone this time, and wandered around the building, amazed at the genius that could dream up something so massive, yet so fluid and light. It seemed impossible to know this building — in a sense, to possess it — yet I was determined to try. I took my first steps up the ramp which rises and falls and cuts through the core of the building, bridging Quincy and Prescott Streets. I peered into the studios that lined my path; interior lights illuminating scenes of paint-spattered art students and their work that lay just behind the expansive glass walls. It was amazing to me that the ramp could give the semblance of penetrating interior space without actually breaking through any physical barriers. That was it for me — the proverbial deal was sealed: I was in love.

Since that day, I have spent countless hours watching foreign movies and art flicks at the Film Archive in the Carpenter Center's basement and attending classes in one of its many rooms. But the ramp remains my favorite part of the building. I pass over it frequently, on my way to class, to the library, or when wandering about with no particular destination. I drag friends along with me, prompting them to marvel at how absolutely exhilarating it is to be simultaneously outside and inside. They nod vigorously in response, uttering appropriate "oohs" and "aahs." I smile, content that their responses are heartfelt and assured that Le Corbusier would be pleased with me for having brought another pilgrim to his only American site.

Now that there is a café and a gallery at the peak of the ramp, many more people are making my favorite trek and experiencing Corbu's masterpiece for themselves. I know that I should be thrilled at this sudden surge of exposure, but somehow I remain ambivalent. I used to feel as though I possessed some sort of secret — that I was an enlightened being and had been granted fluency in the language of poured concrete and curved façades. Before the appearance of the Sert Gallery with its trendy coffee beverages and wrap sandwiches, I could, far more times than not, make the voyage to the other side of the ramp alone, never bumping into another soul. There was never a need to force an unenthusiastic smile and murmur a contrived "hello." In warmer weather, I could sit cross-legged at the apex and scribble in my journal, undisturbed.

These sentiments are selfish, I know, and they will doubtlessly pass in time. Maybe I won't be able to feel that I alone "discovered" the Carpenter Center, or that I am its only champion. But I'll bet you don't know about a wonderful little chapel at the Business School.... ■■■

Johanna C. Richardson is a member of the class of 2001 at Harvard University.



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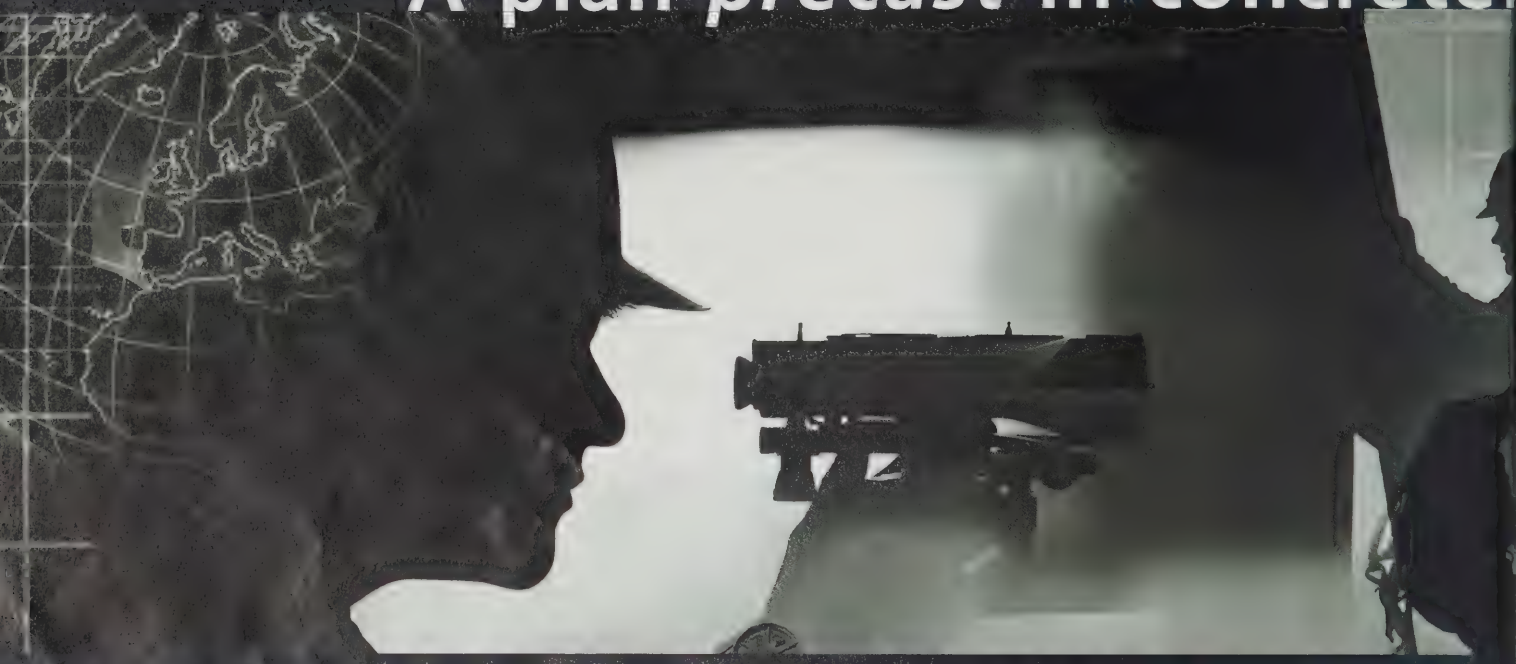
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Retro-chic continues to dominate popular culture as the stylemakers, sated with the '60s, now start to forage around in the '70s. Pucci, platform shoes, Clapton on tour — even Diane von Furstenberg is hoofing the comeback trail. So maybe it's only natural to revisit some of our favorite old intellectual shibboleths, too — like urban sprawl.

Three decades ago, "urban sprawl" — much like "the greenhouse effect" today — was the buzz phrase of earnest specialists whose Cassandra-like predictions were met by a largely apathetic public. But unlike other hallmarks of that era, the phenomenon never went away. Instead, it quietly morphed into something far more virulent. The planners of that time had correctly identified the outbreak of a new disease, but even they could not predict how it would eventually adapt and transmogrify with every social shift: the technology revolution, changing household demographics, the growth of big-box retailers. A plague is now upon us. No longer faced with simple "urban" sprawl, we are seeing the metastasis of new, unfamiliar building patterns. Parts of our cities feel strangely suburban; rural areas sprout million-square-foot office buildings; development erupts like tumorous growths at highway intersections.

Today, sprawl affects millions of Americans, draining their pocketbooks, wasting their time, increasing their stress, destroying their cherished places. They are no longer apathetic — as has been demonstrated by the response to the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England, a two-year program launched by past BSA president Rebecca Barnes FAIA to promote a coordinated regional response to sprawl (*see page 20*). But the prognosis is not necessarily as bleak as it once seemed — we now have an array of remedies at our disposal, and a growing understanding of both the causes and consequences of sprawl.

And there is one other source of optimism: In the last decades of the 20th century, we learned the value of *connection*. Perhaps our deliberate move away from a racially segregated society subliminally influenced the way we look at our communities. Just as different races and ethnicities inhabited discrete places, so were the functions of a city assigned to designated districts, either by zoning or by custom: the Financial District, Leather District, Piano Row, Newspaper Row. Today, we energetically erase those distinctions, encouraging mixed-use and mixed-income development, promoting linkages such as the Urban Ring transitway, embracing trail and park systems like the Bay Circuit and the Minuteman bikeway. Even opposing factions in the debate over the new surface of the submerged Central Artery share the conviction that the project offers an unprecedented opportunity to forge new kinds of connections in the city.

We must now begin to make similar kinds of connections across our region — to erase old rivalries and blur political distinctions. Words like "network," "fabric," and "stakeholder" are no longer self-conscious metaphors in urban development discussions. They can be equally effective in building a more livable New England.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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Editor
Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Managing Editor
Nancy Jenner

Editorial Assistant
Kate Kelly

Art Director
Judy Kohn

Contributing photographers
Bob Kramer
Steve Rosenthal
Peter Vanderwarker

Advertising
Richard Vendola
BSA Sales Office
1645 Falmouth Rd #1A
Centerville, MA 02632
Tel: 800-996-3863
Fax: 508-790-4750
rvendola@capecod.net

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Letters

I read with great interest your recent issue (Summer 2001) dealing with the problems of globalization, specifically the discussion about "Architects without Borders." What struck me was the way the participants failed to address with clarity the very issue that formed the subject of the discussion — the management skills inherent in our culture, which is one of the reasons others seek out our skills. It further touched upon the difficulties American architects face in other regions because of their own (dare I say national) lack of sensitivity to local traditions and antecedents.

Globalization does indeed carry the dangers of potentially swamping local traditions. Americans have often been accused of insensitivity and ignorance in facing local historical precedents, though to a lesser extent than several years ago. This seems particularly puzzling when we in the US, in managing groups of individuals of varying abilities and expertise, succeed exceptionally well in smoothing out relationships and respecting the value of individuals of whatever background as players on the team. Yet we fail to employ equal management techniques in dealing with similar issues when working abroad with individuals with much more fragile sensitivities. Some of the speakers of your discussion indeed acknowledged our arrogance in this respect.

Working with other nationalities and traditions can only enrich us. Cultures have done this consistently throughout history. The assimilation of another culture is not something we need to shy away from; cross-fertilization usually can and does produce some exceptional results. Sentimentally clinging to cultural antecedents can only interfere with the larger benefit of learning from each other and absorbing the best of both cultures, for the long-term benefit of us all. Which traditions will survive and which will be modified or absorbed can not be governed by fiat. At the same time, the superimposition of one culture on another by arrogance will only cause bad feelings. We must retain our consciousness and respect for each other and educate ourselves to what is best in any of our multifaceted cultures.

Peter C. Sugar AIA
Ann Beha Architects
Boston

The Summer 2001 "Import/Export" issue of *ArchitectureBoston* caused me to do something I rarely do: sit for an extended period of time and read an entire magazine.

The topics discussed in that issue have a particular relevance to many of us in Boston. We have all been dealing with the effects of the global economy and the fractured international marketplace for some time.

Many of us have been working for 30 years with one foot in our convenient and friendly local projects, while the other foot dances around on some other continent. I couldn't dream of doing it any other way! Traveling, learning, discovering, testing — it all expands our capabilities and capacities.

As I reflect on this body of experience and watch over some of my firm's current and ongoing work around the world, I know that part of what attaches us all to this business — with its long airplane rides in cramped seats and days of waiting for a busy Crown Prince to offer a few moments of commentary — is our personal and professional (as well as cultural) roots. My father traveled the world building city-block-sized machines to process textiles and other raw materials. And, at 85, he still gets holiday cards from old clients in Japan and South Africa. Our architectural forefathers traveled the world seeking knowledge and experience and a basis for their challenges. And now we do the same. I hope that we export knowledge of the same quality as that which we seek — we learn that Islamic architecture is not about arches, but about sun and shade, wind and sound. We are able to learn so much with the global opportunities presented to us. I urge my colleagues to export as much friendship as possible, learn as much as possible, and look forward to those cards for years to come.

Duncan Pendlebury AIA
Jung|Brannen Associates
Boston

I was so pleased to read your recent issue on globalization. I moved to the US a few years ago in order to finish the architectural education that I started earlier in Egypt. I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to study and practice architecture in both countries. My exposure to the two environments (Islamic culture and American civilization) has convinced me that we must respect both the supremacy of well-established historic principles and the necessity of reasonable consumption of 21st-century knowledge, resources, and opportunities. I have learned that architecture, wherever the location, is neither the outcome of the architect's bias nor the outcome of the local building industry. Rather, it is the outcome of work done by people who have the right grasp of the purpose of the project, who can develop the project within the context of the surrounding environment, and who can identify the fixed requirements of the project while maintaining flexibility in the rest, which promotes creativity in design. The experience of working and learning in different cultures can only enhance our creativity.

Mohammed M. Abdelaal
Boston

ed Landsmark's article, "The Globalization f Architectural Education" (Summer 2001), ises interesting issues on the broadening nfluence of academia and its implications for ie workplace.

)ne of the most profound manifestations of is change, as the author points out, is that any schools, especially MIT and Harvard, are aying a more global role through studios and orkshops that concentrate on improving the uilt environment in South America, Europe, frica, and Asia. This is a classic replay of ends in architectural practice abroad. The scination with Western paradigms and ethodologies in architectural practice that lozhan Khadem articulated so well in the)undtable discussion in this same issue Architects without Borders") has permeated l sections of society including schools of chitecture abroad. Students are also turning) Western media, building types, and hilosophies as inspiration for their chitecture — even though local infrastructure ay not be keeping pace and indigenous chitectural character has greater relevance. lowever, there is little doubt that the utcomes of these workshops enhance the built nvironment globally by providing fresh, genious solutions, especially when design ams are composed of culturally diverse ersonalities.

ontrary to Landsmark's observation, many oreign students do require financial assistance, hich is not an option in the earlier semesters. he situation does improve in the subsequent emesters as research and teaching assistant-hips become available on a competitive basis. nrolling in undergraduate, graduate, and ost-professional programs therefore demands a onsiderable personal and financial commit-ent on the part of foreign students. As a esult, they are committed and determined to ucceed.

hanges in the academic environment are receding changes in the workplace. The road owards registration and recognition in rchitectural practice seems longer for inter-ational students because of the legalities of the ork-permit process and also because many rchitecture programs abroad are not directly ccredited by NCARB [National Council of rchitectural Registration Boards]. Never-heless, recent changes have made work permits asier to obtain and the cultural profile of rchitects and interns in the workplace is eginning to show a greater diversity. A truly lobal architectural practice will emerge when eaders in the profession here in Boston as well s the rest of the United States encompass the ame cultural diversity seen in the academic nvironment today.

Coimbatore Raghuram
Payette Associates
Boston

A minor correction and a comment on the article "The Globalization of Architectural Education" (Summer 2001): The Wentworth Institute's architecture semester abroad program is based in Montpelier, France, where classes are conducted at the School of Architecture of Languedoc-Roussillon and from where students visit sites in Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, Venice, Florence, and Rome. The optimum global educational experience is one where not only the spaces of architectural monuments and local urban patterns are experienced, but also — and more importantly — one where non-North American persons and cultures are known on a long-term daily basis. What more important educational gain is there for architecture students than to understand that the culture of the "other" is as important as their own?

Terrence Heinlein AIA
Department of Architecture
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Boston

I am writing in response to the article on the use of brick in the Boston area ("Boston: Home of the Bean and the Brick") that appeared in your Winter 2000 issue. I found the article to be entertaining due to the amount of intellectual rhetoric given to a material that has been around, essentially unchanged, for centuries. It was as if the Modernist light bulb had gone off and the material had made some significant transformation. I could not help but appreciate James Alexander's comment: "It's not the brick, it's the design, stupid!"

One must understand my perspective. I live in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Our city is young and has evolved from the beautiful city of brick, limestone, and terra-cotta built by oilmen and women who understood urbanism. We are fortunate to have one of the largest collections of Art Deco in the world. However, our city has lost sight of our founders' intentions and continues to allow the destruction of our most historic sites; pedestrian-scaled buildings have been demolished to provide parking. But perhaps the single most destructive addition to our environment is the extensive use of EIFS (synthetic stucco). This building product is heavily used in this region because of cost and ignorance. Many brick buildings have been covered with this product, which has robbed these buildings of their inherent texture. We feel fortunate when we convince our clients to use brick in lieu of EIFS and only wish we could worry about what Modernist pattern could be applied to our structures.

With continuing sprawl and all its EIFS-clad big-box stores, our city continues to lose its identity — something Boston will never lose if it continues to build on what has worked for over 200 years.

Matt King AIA
Tulsa, Oklahoma

I write from the frontlines as an officer of the "aesthetic police" supported by Jeremiah Eck in "The Home Makers" (Spring 2001). As a member of the Hull (Massachusetts) Design Review Board, I helped review the Avalon Estates project pictured in that article.

The Avalon Estates site juts out as a peninsula into a tidal salt marsh. Avalon's design approach featured the standard American car-oriented apartment complex of parking lots and scattered repeated generic New England buildings. Our Design Review Board, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission continually requested that the project be pulled back and consolidated in the spine of the peninsula to minimize its presence and impact on the salt marsh and woods. Avalon did grudgingly reduce the unit count and pulled back somewhat from its "by right" position, but flatly refused to consider any design significantly different from its standard formula.

In your article, Thomas Zahoruiko commented that aesthetic-related bylaws do not promote design diversity. On the contrary, our board requested more creative design and color schemes, but Avalon was adamant on basic unit repetition and a uniform gray color scheme. The oft-cited diversity of architectural expression eventually found in Levittown sounds good, but that project consisted of individual privately owned houses. In the uniformly controlled apartment or condo pod, what you see now is what you get in the future, albeit with more mature landscaping.

Tony Green's comment that the solution is zoning requiring more density in the right places is correct and mirrors what our board tried to do. As was repeatedly driven home in the article, housing is just another carefully marketed consumer product, no different from an SUV or large-screen TV. Design review *can* be successful in promoting good architecture and smart growth. Ultimately, though, the tyranny of housing-as-consumer-product and the unwillingness of most developers and towns to question the *status quo* usually results in the path of least resistance.

A final note: The Avalon site was a known coyote habitat. Displaced from their woodland abode, the coyotes are now making new homes throughout the entire town — without benefit of planners, architects, or developers.

Don Ritz AIA
Hull, Massachusetts

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to: epadjen@architects.org or sent to: *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

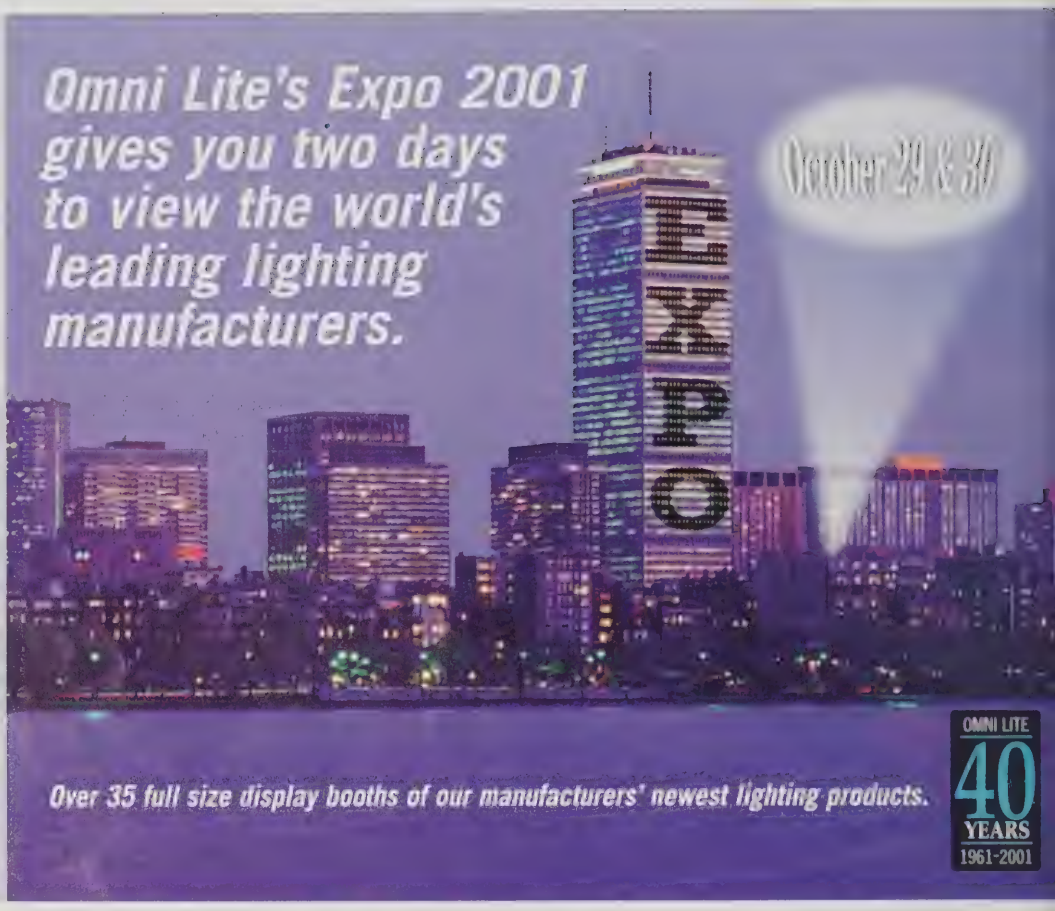
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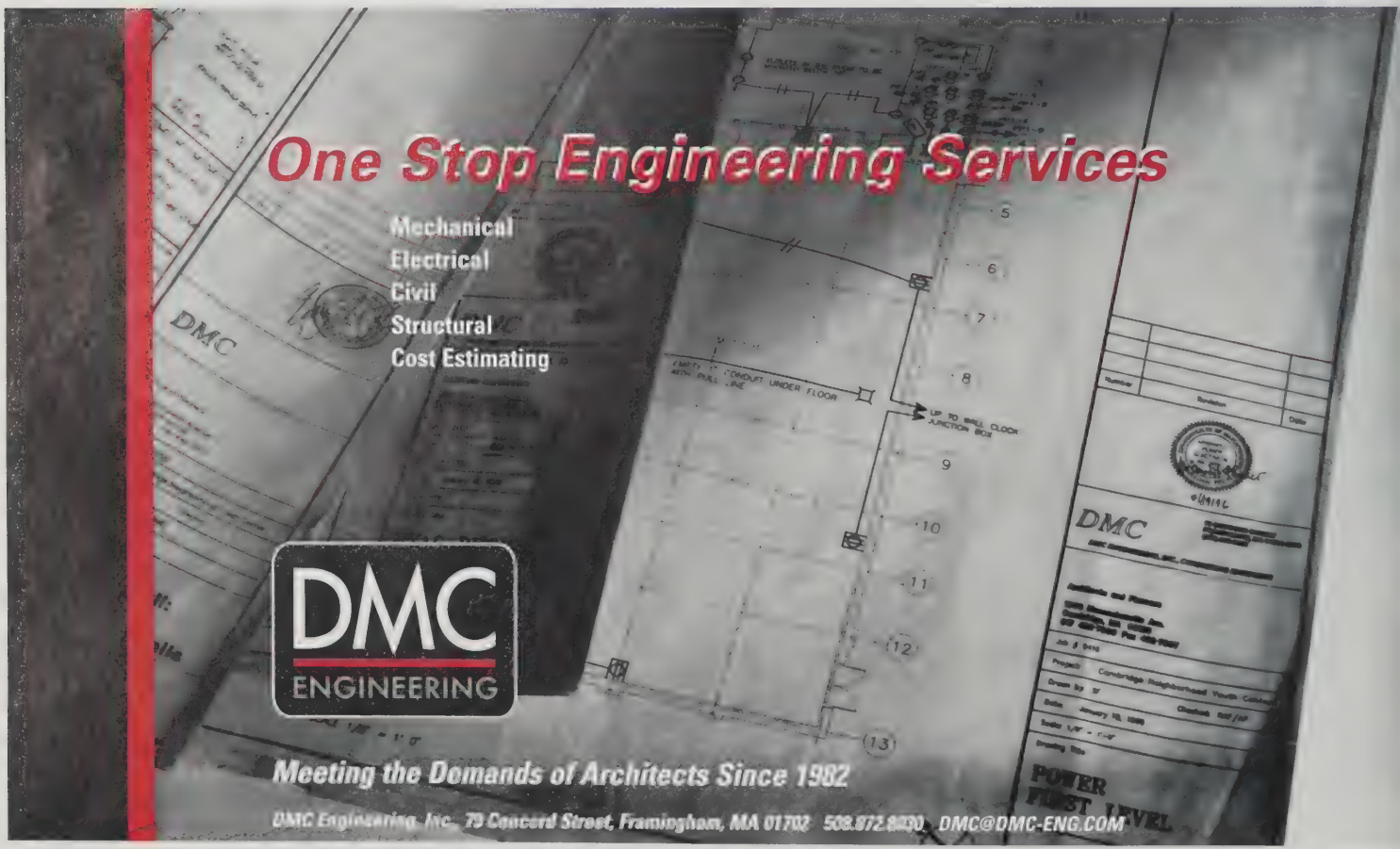
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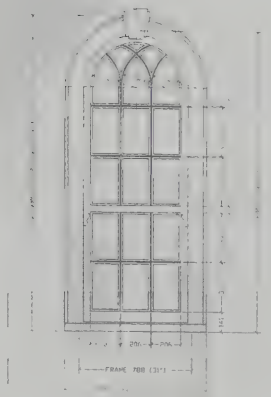
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Getting Smart About Growing Smart

It's not your imagination... sprawl *is* getting worse. What can we do about it? (And why hasn't anybody fixed it?)

PARTICIPANTS

Armando Carbonell is co-chair of the department of planning and development at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was previously the executive director of the Cape Cod Commission.

Jack Clarke is the director of advocacy for the Massachusetts Audubon Society and is chair of the Gloucester Planning Board.

Charles Euchner is the executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He was previously the associate director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University.

Phil Herr is a planning consultant in Newton, Massachusetts, and a professor retired from the department of urban studies and planning at MIT, where he taught for more than 30 years.

Randolph Jones AIA, AICP is a principal of Jones Payne Architects & Planners in Boston. He is past co-chair of the BSA Urban Design Committee and is currently co-chair of the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Wig Zamore is a real estate financial consultant in Somerville, Massachusetts.

zabeth Padjen: The discussion of sprawl seems to have ıched a fever pitch nationally in the last few years, with undant coverage in the media and greater political attention the issue. But sprawl isn't new, and discussions of it certainly en't new. This has been a conversation going on for a very ıg time — 30 or 40 years at least. What's different about e discussion today? What keeps the general population from ning out because they've heard it all before?

il Herr: My involvement in this issue goes back to the rly 1960s, maybe even '50s. One difference is that many ore people are personally hurt by the effects of sprawl day. Before, sprawl was an abstraction — something that s hurting some people, but most people weren't themselves ected. A second difference is that there is now a set of nedies that didn't exist before. People have the expectation at we can actually do something about it. Not many ople believed that in the past. Sprawl had a sense of evitability about it. It was inevitable, but it didn't really rt. Now it hurts, but it's not inevitable.

arles Euchner: I think that one of the most important anges is that people don't think that cities are beyond hope. enty years ago or even 10 years ago, there was a sense that e problems of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, even ston, were so severe that nobody could ever do anything out them and we would simply have to accept them. It emed that the price of living in an urban environment was tting up with all sorts of inhumane surroundings and dequate services. But in the last decade or two, we have covered not only that cities are capable of revitalization, but o that in many ways they are the key to our success as a ciety: They are the incubators of artistic creativity, centers of chnological advances, they're the hope of our environment, d they are the kind of places where we can actually bring ople together.

ck Clarke: Sprawl has become personal — it's not just a blic-policy issue that you read about in the paper. The erage American spends two weeks a year in a car. That's a ious issue and it's a personal issue. As an urban society up the end of World War II, people had mass transit, they uld walk to the store, neighborhoods were built around urches, houses were closer together and closer to the streets, ople sat on their stoops talking in the summer evenings. But deral subsidies encouraged people to move out of the cities. ıe GI Bill provided education for men and women coming me from World War II, giving them upward mobility. terans loans helped people build houses. The federal ghway system allowed people to spread out rapidly. So there s the financial incentive from the federal level for people to t out of the cities, to have their large lot and their large use. And then they discovered they had a whole new set of ues to deal with: "I can no longer walk to the store. I've got a one-acre yard — it's too big to mow, but too small to farm — and I've got to keep it maintained." Now we are all invested in our suburban road systems. Daily life for a lot of people means driving the kids to the soccer game, driving for bread and milk, driving to church or the town hall — and it all involves getting in the car. That's what makes it personal.

Elizabeth Padjen: I sometimes worry that the current discussion is in danger of being perceived as an elitist conversation and, perhaps more counterproductive, as a politically partisan conversation. There are still lots of people who say, "The city is fine for other people, but I want to be someplace nice."

Randolph Jones: You're touching on the issue of choice, which drives a lot of the debate. These are personal matters — where we chose to live, where we work, where we send our children to school. But in making those big locational decisions, we need an alternative to Toll Brothers subdivisions, for example. The answer is to redirect investment into our inner-suburban school systems, focus more dollars on transit, and provide more affordable housing. We're already starting to do that. Our traditional New England building patterns offer a framework for an alternative to suburbia.

Armando Carbonell: I agree that the discussion is about increasing the amount of choice and the number of options available. I don't think many people believe today that it is possible to completely reject the standard model of suburbia. The forces of decentralization have been going on for so long and are so strong that they've created significant investments, a whole set of behavior patterns, and also substantial infrastructure. But there are many different models for urban development. We have the opportunity to think about the central city in different ways, creating not an elitist model that's available only to a few, but an opportunity to offer options for people who may fit very different profiles in terms of their needs for housing and work.

Elitist or not, we are not going to create a successful agenda if it rejects the idea that we have already gone very far down the road of decentralization. We need to accept what we have to work with today, and not over-promise what we can do in the short run. I agree with Bob Burchell from Rutgers, who says that if we can only deal with one third of the new growth in a very centralized fashion, keep one third within some reasonable proximity to community centers, and let one third go, we will still have significantly changed the overall pattern of growth in this country. And that hardly sounds as though we are saying that everybody has to work in a certain kind of place, and walk to work, and live in a prescribed pattern of behavior. It suggests that there will be choices in all categories.

Charles Euchner: The biggest challenge is to honor the different kinds of choices that people have made. The very worst thing that the smart-growth movement can do is to start wagging its finger at upscale suburbs like Wellesley and Weston. My favorite author and thinker on these issues is Christopher Alexander. And in his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, he says that every structure, every piece of work in a neighborhood or in a community, should aim at healing the larger whole. If we go at it from that stand-point, we aren't going to be setting ourselves at cross-purposes with people who choose, quite legitimately, a suburban way of life. There's a lot that they like about the suburbs, especially the schools. But there's a lot they don't like, and that they would welcome working on. And that means working across urban and suburban lines.

Elizabeth Padjen: Christopher Alexander's observation suggests, in my mind, a wholly different value system from what is the reality of our society today. If every move is to heal the larger whole, that suggests a communitarian sense of sharing, or working toward the common good, that in many respects is a very old-fashioned idea. It's an idea that comes out of rural tradition, but is it really afloat in modern society? Can that work? A lot of sprawl is driven, subdivision by subdivision, by incremental decisions and incremental growth — individuals deciding what they're going to do with one piece of property.

Charles Euchner: The solution doesn't have to have a communitarian flavor to it. But it has to have a problem-solving flavor to it that responds very directly to people's immediate desires and anxieties.

Phil Herr: Alexander's work is at least as much about process as it is about prescriptive rules. What you find is that there are ways of both providing healing for the larger context and satisfying the interest of individuals. That requires a way of talking together that we are not as good at as we should be, although there are a lot more people today who are able to create processes of that kind than there used to be. I don't expect individuals to act altruistically, and I don't expect municipalities to act altruistically, but it's in their self-interest to work with others. That isn't just dream communitarianism — it is achievable.

Armando Carbonell: You could say that the current situation comes from mostly rational behaviors by individuals trying to solve problems in their own lives, within the options that are available to them. And in many cases they are making decisions that seem very sensible when seen on the micro-scale, but when seen in the aggregate, don't make sense at all. Planning, to put it very simply, is about giving people a process for looking beyond their individual decisions, for understanding their ability to shape the physical environment and their lives by working together with others in a way that achieves a better result.

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We've grown less urban...

Boston metropolitan area:
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Massachusetts landscape is vanishing...

Land in farms, 1950–2000:
down 50%

Land in subdivisions, office parks and malls, 1950–2000:
up 200%

We're spreading out, not really growing:

Population density, 1950–2000:
down 55%

Statistics courtesy
How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England/BSA

Elizabeth Padjen: My sense is that people today are more sophisticated about understanding the complete system — how pushing on one edge will eventually have an effect on the other edge. They understand that planning is not done in a discrete little box.

Armando Carbonell: And yet we constantly see examples of how unsophisticated we are — simple solutions for very complicated problems that can actually be made worse by the simple decision. Both politicians and citizens need to understand the tools and options that are available to them and what the costs and benefits for different approaches will be.

Wig Zamore: I suspect that more people are aware of the ramifications of their decisions than they were in the past. They understand that sprawl is not an isolated problem. But I'm not sure that most people know where to find solutions. Increasing the knowledge base is a challenge in itself — it rarely happens when the advocacy gets too feisty.

Charles Euchner: People have a hard time knowing when they can push back. When they see a giant big-box retailer like Wal-Mart show up and say, "We need a footprint of this size, and we need a parking lot of that size, or otherwise we won't come, and our headquarters back in Dubuque says this is non-negotiable," people tend to accept that as a reality. And then they have to make a decision: either go with the monster box, or forego the tax revenue. In fact, a lot of national retailers are willing to negotiate and make their structures fit into the local context. They'd rather use the cookie-cutter, but they will negotiate in order to get access to a market. There are pockets of amazing knowledge about this sort of thing, but you can't find it everywhere. We're very lucky in Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, and Somerville to have people who have been through these wars. Other communities don't have this experience, and they don't have the density of people who care about these things, or who have the time to care about them. We've got some pretty decent tools that are already available; we just need to know how to use them.

Phil Herr: We've got good tools for some things. I think of sprawl as happening in three scales. The first is the small scale, where development sprawls all across a parcel. The parcel may have land of varying qualities or character, but with "parcel sprawl" it all gets treated the same. We've known how to address that problem for as long as I've been in practice. The simplest solution is cluster development, where you put the houses where they belong and the open spaces where they belong. Then there's the issue of sprawl that occurs at the municipal scale, where portions of the community that have very different attributes of access or land quality or history get treated in ways that don't respect those qualities, and you wind up with "municipal sprawl" that homogenizes the community. That's a problem that can be addressed with the most traditional tools of municipal planning, although we've more recently added some newer tricks like growth boundaries and transfer of development rights.

And then there's the third scale of sprawl, at the regional level. If growth is accommodated uniformly across the region, we'll be sprawling across the region in a very destructive way. That's a problem that requires yet another set of tools, and that's where we in this part of the world aren't well equipped. We need new tools to address the pattern of growth at the regional scale. Is it a good idea that a huge share of the growth in the next decade is going to occur along Route 495? Is that what we want? Do we want to take vitality out of our civic places and put it out in those communities? I suspect few people think that's a good idea, but it's hard to even think about the complexity of the problem, let alone address it.

Armando Carbonell: Regional planning is a subject that deserves more attention in Massachusetts — it's true that we have no real mechanism right now for thinking about growth at that scale. And there's really no good reason to explain the lack of a mechanism. Other states have figured out how to do this. One interesting example is Maryland, which has a very deliberate policy of focusing development in areas of existing infrastructure and directing state investments to support that.

Jack Clarke: It's a policy that comes right from the governor's office.

Randolph Jones: We talked earlier about the differences in the sprawl discussion of 20 or 30 years ago. That was an era when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts actually had an Office of State Planning — which it used very effectively. One example was Wang — which is no longer around, but was then a wildly successful homespun high-tech company in Lowell, which was encouraged to stay within the city. Another example was Pyramid Companies — the Office of State Planning negotiated their relocation to downtown Pittsfield, with what was the largest UDAG [Urban Development Action Grant] in the country at that time. So there was a time when we enjoyed an active, state-level, public policy that said, "We are concerned about the location of new development, and we are going to do something about it."

Phil Herr: But that lasted less than four years. It grew out of a great process, in which the majority of the municipalities in Massachusetts participated actively, and the great majority of people who were activists concerned with these issues really felt that their voices had been heard. The policy was really a consensual one, and people rallied around its nifty tagline: suburbs didn't want to become cities, rural areas didn't want to become suburbs, and the cities didn't want to become wastelands. Those agreements were turned into a very coherent set of actions that required no new legislation and no new form of government. They simply took a state government prepared to use the authority and resources it already had to lead us in a new direction.

Elizabeth Padjen: I remember apparently simple things, like determining where curb-cuts would be allowed. What would seem to be dumb little tools became pretty potent when used coherently. So why did all that evaporate?

Randolph Jones: The recession loomed and we hit the skids — it was a very different economic time.

Jack Clarke: And unfortunately we haven't revisited those policies. The closest we've come is providing tax incentives for the redevelopment of brownfields — directing industrial and commercial development to existing contaminated industrial sites. But we haven't broadened that thinking to direct growth where we want it. I think Maryland Governor Parris Glendening has certainly done it for his state. Vermont Governor Howard Dean has reduced sales taxes on Main Street and increased it at the malls, encouraging people to shop and build new retail space in town centers, not by prohibiting it in any one area, but by providing financial incentives.

Charles Euchner: One thing that we need to think about is keeping things as simple as possible. I know that we live in a complex world, I know that there are all kinds of factors that enter into a decision about where and how you are going to build. But it's important to develop incentives that are easily understood, and therefore have some legitimacy. I think the genius of Parris Glendening is that he came up with something that was very straightforward. He said, "I'm not going to prevent you from developing in undeveloped areas, I'm just not going to help you. However, I *am* going to help those who already have something to offer, and simply need a little bit of a boost to make it on their own." I think it was a very straightforward deal that he cut with the people of his state. One of the things that concerns me is that many of the ideas that are springing up seem to add to the complexity and the confusion of public policy, rather than stripping away the more negative aspects and the perverted incentives.

Let me pose a possibility. In Minnesota, a civil war is going on over the tax structure. Governor Jesse Ventura, wants to replace property taxes with a new income tax and sales tax regime. It would do much to alleviate the kind of balkanization of that state, because one of the major reasons people move to suburbs is that they want better schools, and people in wealthier communities can afford to pay for better schools. It's a very straightforward way of removing a perverted incentive. I don't know if Jesse Ventura particularly cares about sprawl, but he's attacking a very fundamental inequity that's built into the system. And if we get back to our discussion of choice, that's really what's at stake here. Some people have choice and some people don't. We can't look for a magic bullet, because there's never going to be one. But we should be looking for a handful of major perversions that we should remove. And that can make a bigger difference than creating another apparatus on top of our existing apparatus.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Our sprawl is happening quickly...

Percentage of developed land in Massachusetts
in 1996: 25%
in 2010: 33%

Percentage of all class-A office space in downtown Boston:
in 1985: 70%
in 2000: 40%

We're severely straining our social fabric...

More than 75% of African-American and Hispanic-American citizens live in cities.

In 2000, almost 60,000 low-skill workers in Boston were competing for 10,000 available jobs.

Household income in core communities is less than 50% of the household income of outer communities.

Statistics courtesy
How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England/BSA

rmando Carbonell: I wouldn't argue with greater clarity in ublic policy. I think we need to create incentives that are nuch more transparent and consistent, and that we should se the power of government in a much more intelligent way. ut I think there's another challenge to our colleagues in the esign fields. We need real projects on the ground that really nake use of everything we've learned about building places nd designing communities. It's a tremendous opportunity for he people who are the audience of *ArchitectureBoston* to think ot just about large-scale policy choices, but also to do the ind of empirical work that becomes a model for others. The mall town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, for example, has crafted plan that makes a lot more sense than the standard model nd demonstrates to other communities that it can be done. Massachusetts has had a couple of experiments in planning, he Cape Cod Commission and the Martha's Vineyard Commission. These are considered quite unusual across the ountry. I no longer advocate copying them in a specific way — communities should respond to their own needs and onditions — but I think they demonstrate that it's possible or communities to craft a set of solutions that work in their wn geographic and human context. I hope we can encourage impler, clearer policies at the state level without discouraging he kind of experimentation and progress that can be made n individual communities at a very finite, small scale.

lizabeth Padjen: Let's return for a moment to Jesse Ventura's ax proposal — simply because it poses a fascinating hypothesis. Is the property tax a "hidden persuader" in its influence n sprawl? How much in planning, how much in terms of ndividual choice as we've discussed it, is based on the simple nechanism of the property tax? Let's play that out and magine no property tax — simply a combination of income nd sales tax. What would be some of the differences here in Massachusetts?

Phil Herr: My view is that the impact would be smaller than nany people think. I work in many communities which, generation ago, were powerfully influenced by fiscal consequences, but are much less so now. Partly because they've earned to live with Proposition 2½, which limited the growth f property taxes in Massachusetts, partly because there is n increasing understanding of the equalizing effects of state id, and partly because of an increasing aversion to the broad mpacts of projects that are otherwise tax-lucrative. The city f Cambridge [Massachusetts] recently underwent a searching, nulti-year re-examination of its development controls, at he end of which it substantially reduced its potential for nonesidential development in order to accommodate more oom for residential development. That's not the best way to pproach development from a fiscal perspective, but the city hose it because people thought it would create a better city.

Charles Euchner: But one of the central concerns with property taxes is who gets the money to have better schools and therefore who gets the money to draw the affluent families. But there's another aspect, too, which is that our reliance on property tax encourages certain kinds of new development, such as big boxes, because they are exempt from the limits of Proposition 2½. So if you're a town manager, you've essentially got a situation where you can either ask for an override [a vote to increase the allowed tax limit], which is not very politically popular, or you can take the new revenues from the big box. It's our reliance on the property tax in the first place that is driving us to accept things that we don't really want.

Wig Zamore: I would say that there's an unevenness in understanding of fiscal impact, not just among the general public, but among the people who run our cities and towns. Cities like Boston and Cambridge and some of the more affluent towns understand the cost-to-benefit ratios of different kinds of commercial properties. They look at a proposed office building in terms of revenue per unit of traffic and jobs per unit of traffic. The communities that take the big boxes believe they are going to gain fiscally, but rarely do, given their alternatives. Because 15 acres of big boxes will create as much traffic as 15 acres of mixed-use development and only 1/10th the tax revenue and jobs. That unevenness of understanding creates a circular situation. It puts the less able towns in a worse and worse position to pull themselves out.

Somerville, for example, is so dense that the city spends $100,000 dollars per acre per year in services. A big box will only generate $50,000 per acre per year in taxes, so it only generates half the spending rate. It's like running a lemonade stand where you guarantee a dollar's worth of lemons in every 50¢ glass. It's very hard to get ahead, doing that.

Elizabeth Padjen: Okay, but it's easy to beat up on the big boxes. Let's continue with the no-property-tax scenario. Can you imagine that it would lead to no growth? That development would come to a screeching halt? What would be the incentive for a city or town to take on new office, commercial, or industrial development if the residents perceive that it's noxious or that it generates traffic?

Wig Zamore: There wouldn't be one, unless they wanted the jobs. Families need jobs, and it's better to have jobs close to where you live.

Phil Herr: I work with a couple of communities in the Blackstone Valley [in central Massachusetts], where the power lines and gas lines cross, so they are being courted by power-plant developers. The town of Bellingham has one plant in place, one under construction, and a third just approved. It is widely believed that because of the huge taxes those plants pay and the low demands they make on services the town should have no fiscal problem for many, many years.

EMC then came along and said it would like to accommodate 2,700 workers in a million or so square feet of office building. The town loved the idea. They loved the prestige that goes with having that campus and they loved having good jobs nearby. So I think there are still attractions, even when you take away the fiscal incentives. However, that same community is now giving a cold reception to developers coming along proposing little strip malls. The town just isn't very interested in those right now. Fiscal freedom from immediate property tax concerns has indeed changed the equation.

Randolph Jones: It sounds as if it's given the community choice. It gives residents the ability to say no as well as yes.

Phil Herr: And of course there are other ramifications. Fiscal resources also give the town the ability to hire good staff, so it is now managing its own affairs far better than ever before. It is making the leap from being underserved to being very nicely served. The education issue is of course far more complicated than just access to tax dollars. Boston, for example, spends more per pupil than all but one municipality in all of Massachusetts. But the perceptions of what are good schools don't perfectly correlate with what is spent on them.

Charles Euchner: Suppose we were to have equal state funding of schools and suppose we were to say that we are going to embrace a diversity of schools, as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements, and basic civil rights and fairness requirements. You would have a situation where on the one hand you would have centralization of funding, and on the other hand you would allow an incredible level of dynamism at the local level. That's how we should be thinking in regional planning. We should make sure that we have some very compelling tools, but we should also allow localities to decide how to use them in their communities. A lot of smart-growth people are going to be uncomfortable with that. But ultimately we have to think not about creating a cookie-cutter approach or a top-down approach, but creating incentives that allow great experimentation throughout the region.

Wig Zamore: But, unlike education, you can't give each city and town a transportation budget or the right to build a subway station. If we look at the forces behind sprawl, transportation has to be pretty close behind land-use or schooling choices. Equity in transportation infrastructure is a tough problem. One of the big things that has changed in the last 20 to 30 years is that people lost faith in roads as the solution to everything. And now we are still faced with the need to supply transportation. The closer you get to a city, the more often transportation can work as a regional system because of the greater density. But there's an inequity if the state or the federal government isn't giving equal access to public transportation to cities and towns of similar densities. One local example is the plight of Chelsea and Somerville — the two densest cities in Massachusetts. They have one subway stop and one commuter rail station between them.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

We are literally driving ourselves crazy...

Boston has more freeway miles per capita than Los Angeles.

Regional annual vehicle miles 1970–2000: up 75%

Regional population 1970–2000: up 10%

We're paving our way to pollution...

Despite clean air and water laws, over the next 5 years:

Massachusetts air quality will get worse.

More Massachusetts rivers will not meet EPA standards.

15% of Massachusetts animal and plant species will be endangered.

Statistics courtesy
How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England/BSA

Phil Herr: You have to wonder why we're investing in air-conditioned commuter rail to New Bedford, when it is still so hard to get from Somerville to Boston.

Charles Euchner: Must these communities be served by a transit station? Are there other alternatives to automobile travel? Transportation is obviously one of the most difficult aspects of sprawl, because it involves such a complex mixture of choice and uneven opportunity. If you live in Chelsea and work in Framingham, good luck getting there. Can we open up the possibility of private vendors providing experimental new services?

Elizabeth Padjen: Chelsea and Framingham describe an inherent part of the problem — the growing distance between homes and workplaces, as people move away from jobs in the center city. That's exacerbated by the fact that people need flexibility in their schedules. Employers are demanding longer working hours. No one is out of the office by five o'clock and a lot of people can't predict in the morning when they'll come home at night. And maybe they'll need to run an errand or pick up kids from daycare. Transportation alternatives have to accommodate the changes in the work environment.

Charles Euchner: But let's go back to an earlier observation — if we can reduce sprawl by even one third, we might not solve everything, but it would make the world a hell of a lot better than if we do nothing. Maybe we should think of transportation in that way. Let me suggest that there's a kind of tipping-point dynamic to this. I live in Jamaica Plain. I walk a lot and drive my car maybe twice a week. I have it in case I need to do a big buy or visit my sister in New Hampshire or something like that. What would get me to give up my car and what would get other people to give up at least their second cars? The car-sharing concept, such as Zipcars, [rentals by the hour] is very promising. We need to find solutions that can turn things back without fighting inexorable forces. The car is here for good. But do we need the car for every quick trip we take? No.

Elizabeth Padjen: But when you need a car, you're still going to use a car. It doesn't matter if it's your car or a car you share. The fact that there may be multiple cars in a household doesn't mean that they are all on the road at once.

Charles Euchner: But you're more likely to use a car if it's sitting in front of your house than if you have to go down two blocks to pick it up. And car-sharing could diminish one of the biggest blights on our urban neighborhoods now, which is the proliferation of surface parking. One of the biggest fears that I have is what I call internal sprawl, where we are making our cities like the worst aspects of our suburbs, with Walgreens and Stop-and-Shops surrounded by huge parking lots.

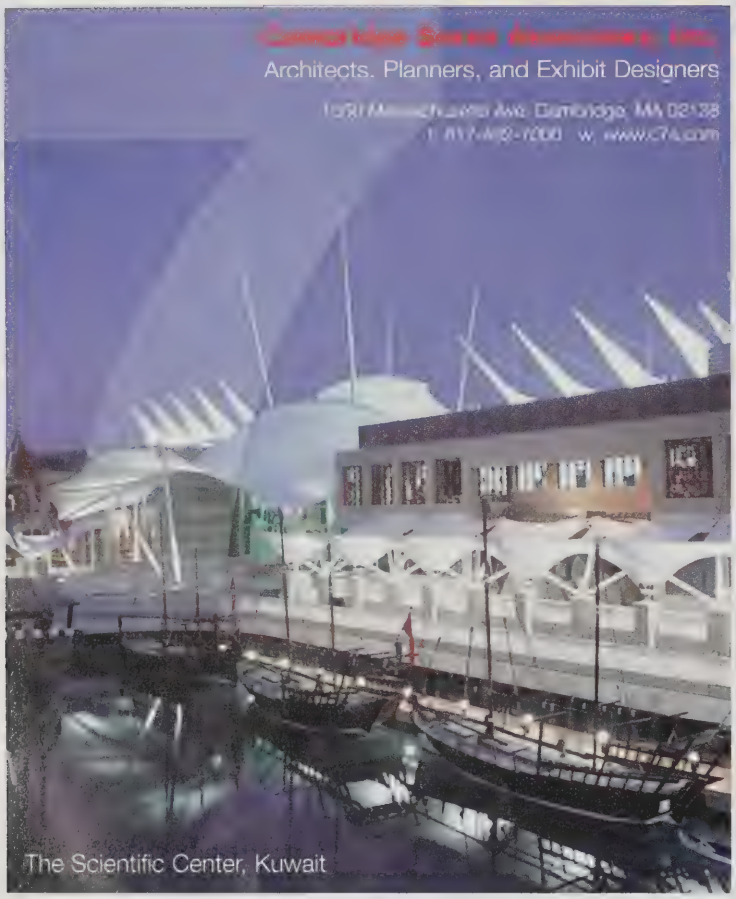
Wig Zamore: And we are seeing a behavioral shift in car-sharing people. They have to pay for every mile they drive, so there's much more incentive to monitor how many miles they drive. The people who have switched to car-sharing drive fewer miles than they did when they drove their own cars.

Phil Herr: One of the fundamental roots of sprawl is that the cost of travel has been hugely reduced, so it is much cheaper now to travel long distances than it was two generations ago. When we support the highway bond act, we are in fact subsidizing sprawl. When we make rail travel cheap, we're subsidizing sprawl. There are Tokyo corporations that give commuter passes for the bullet train to their executives as a perk. Some of those people are now commuting 100 miles from Tokyo. That's subsidizing sprawl.

Charles Euchner: And that brings up the issue of political will. Politicians don't want to contradict their constituents. Politicians need to push back a bit when their constituents say "I don't want density," or "I want parking because I need to be able to bring my dry cleaning into my house," or "I need to be able to have my customers park right in front of my store." But density is one of those issues where anyone who's concerned about sprawl and livability needs to speak with a strong voice.

Boston is about a third less dense now than it was a century ago. Which means there are a third fewer customers for local businesses. Doesn't that matter to anybody? Can't we agree that that is a significant problem, rather than letting ourselves be cowed by people who say that more people mean more traffic? That's ultimately what's going to give the smart-growth agenda some traction. We in this country have all become so used to having everything we want. We can have a wonderful urban neighborhood, we can have a wonderful park, we can have big sprawling school campuses, we can hop in our car and drive across town and commute across the state. But ultimately this comes down to choices. We need to understand the consequences of our choices.

Wig Zamore: It's often very difficult to reconcile altruism with self-interest. But a lot of people have an interest in protecting their community fabric, because it's a reflection of their own identity — their life, their work, their home. And maybe recognizing that a simple yearning for a sense of place is something most of us have in common is enough to start us in the right direction. ■■■



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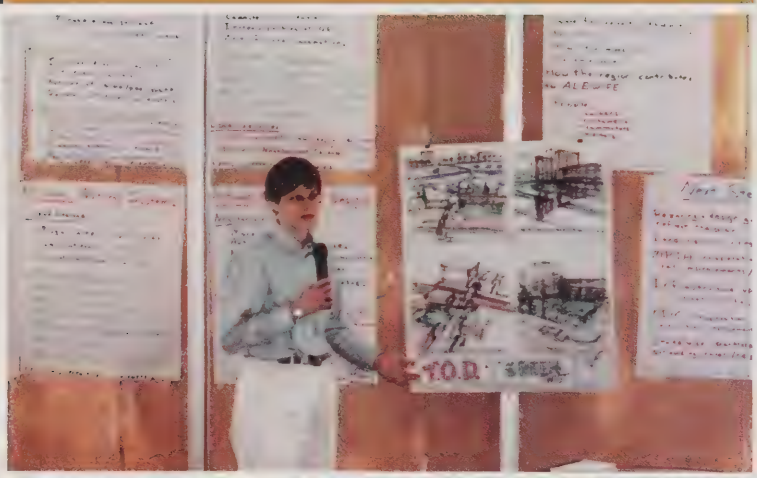
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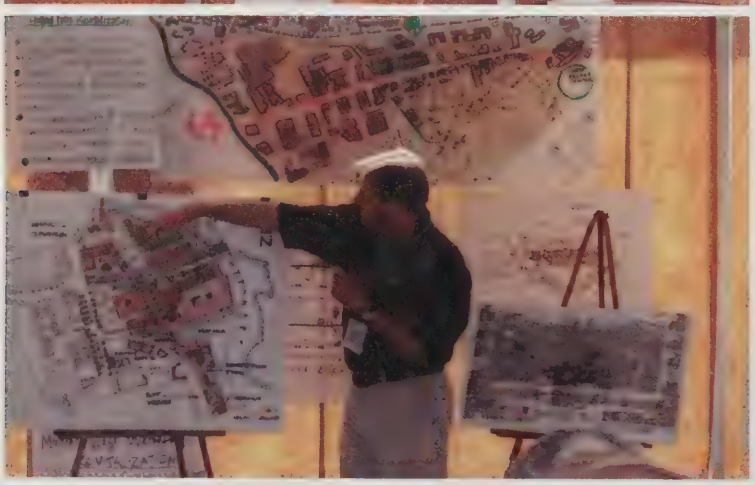
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How We Live:
A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England

by Larissa V. Brown PhD, AICP

photos: Larissa Brown





Brainstorming the future: Over 200 people participated in a 2 ½-day session combining big-picture thinking about regional growth with case studies of specific planning problems.

A town common headed by a spare white church…country roads shaded by sugar maples…compact cities of close-knit neighborhoods and walkable streets…small-scale farms and orchards…forested hills and shimmering marshes…meadows bounded by stone walls. These are the talismans of place in New England. They hold our imagination and, because they do so, they are also the images we use to sell New England to tourists and to ourselves. But is this really "how we live?" What about the farms and orchards turned into subdivisions, miles of commercial strip development along historic roads, struggling old industrial cities unable to provide jobs for new immigrants, traffic-jammed highways, increasing economic inequity, and soaring housing costs?

Although we are reluctant to admit it, New England has become the land of sprawl, where land consumption far outstrips population growth. During the last half-century, we saw urban population centers dissolving into a low-density periphery and the decentralization of everything — employment, shopping, education, and entertainment, as well as housing. Now, in the 21st century, each major city is surrounded by a nimbus of varying development densities, from high-tech clusters to pockets of farmland. These multi-centered metropolitan regions are composed of hundreds of separate municipalities, each attempting to shape land use and development within its own borders. But watersheds, transportation systems, and markets are not constrained by municipal boundaries. When individual communities try to control growth within their own borders through building caps, downzoning, or other efforts designed to save local "rural character" or neighborhood quality of life, they end up pushing growth farther into areas that are even more rural, setting off a new cycle of development and traffic congestion. The result is less open space, more pressure on environmental resources, more traffic, and more expensive housing.

The livability of our cities and towns is at stake and our traditional reliance on local decision-making is inadequate to the task of managing development. We need effective regional approaches to planning. The Boston Society of Architects (BSA), building on its long tradition of civic engagement, began the new century with a two-year program of events to promote the implementation of "smart growth" policies in the Boston metropolitan region and New England.

Led by Rebecca Barnes FAIA, past president of the BSA, and supported by a diverse group of civic, professional, governmental, environmental, and business groups, the program was designed to bring disparate communities together. These events, collectively called "How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England," focused on the Boston metropolitan region, which now extends into New Hampshire and Rhode Island. But the experience of the Boston region is not unique in New England, and smart-growth initiatives are under way in all the New England states.

Designed to be participatory, inclusive, and visionary, the Civic Initiative has also been pragmatic. From the beginning, the many individuals and organizations who contributed to shaping the program of events wanted to make sure that the Civic Initiative would include an agenda for action and a strategy for implementation. The Civic Initiative was composed of a series of elements:

- **The Challenge**: More than 400 people attended a conference held in Boston in September 2000 to identify key questions and inspire participants to work for change.
- **Regional Workshops**: Workshops in February and March 2001 were held in three communities outside Boston, highlighting the relationship between struggling older cities with new immigrant populations and their neighboring affluent suburbs; obstacles and opportunities for supporting growth in urbanized inner suburbs while preserving neighborhood quality of life; and the dynamics of suburban sprawl, including the growing need for nonresidential tax revenues, and ambivalent attitudes toward affordable-housing initiatives. Over 150 people attended the workshops.
- **Regional Charrette**: A 2½-day brainstorming session ("charrette") in late April 2001 combined big-picture thinking about regional themes with case studies focusing on specific places and planning problems. Discussions focused on the key forces that shape the character and location of regional growth and development such as transportation, economic development, housing, environmental priorities, infrastructure, and fiscal demands. The case studies were solicited through a call-for-proposals distributed to community leaders, nonprofits, and others throughout the region. Ten teams of participants, including both local sponsors and professionals, worked on nine case studies including village- and town-center revitalization; neighborhood access to an industrial waterfront; appropriate development in a three-municipality border area marked by a wide diversity of land uses, environmental sensitivity, and traffic congestion; development in the high-tech ring along I-495; and redevelopment of contaminated industrial brownfields and abandoned mall sites. Charrette participants were asked to develop proposals based on smart-growth principles and to identify how smart-growth policies would help them solve the planning problems they faced. Over 200 people participated in the charrette.
- **Future Search**: In June 2001, a group of 64 people met over a weekend to develop an agenda to bring the Civic Initiative forward from vision to implementation.
- **Implementation**: In the fall of 2001, the Civic Initiative is moving into its implementation phase with the publication of a report, forums for political candidates to speak about sprawl and smart growth, and establishment of an ongoing coalition. This active agenda will include state legislation as well as local planning initiatives that will expand upon existing community preservation and environmental efforts.

It has been said that the only thing Americans hate more than sprawl is density, and the "density question" was fundamental to all the Civic Initiative discussions. Mixed-use development, clustering houses to save open space, and greater housing density were the hallmarks of the charrette case-study results. New investment in fixed-route public transportation was very popular with groups working on urban and inner-suburban case studies. They saw public transportation as the key to making denser mixed-use neighborhoods acceptable in existing urbanized communities.

Working on more peripheral communities or subregions, Civic Initiative participants struggled with the results of 50 years of low-density suburbanization in the context of municipal competition for the non-residential tax base, increasing economic segregation, variations in the quality of school systems, circumferential travel patterns, and an identity crisis in many towns that still believe they are rural long after they have been swept into the expanding metropolitan nebula. In these parts of the region, encouraging density in existing older communities, in town centers, and through redevelopment of sites such as brownfields and abandoned malls was seen as the key to conserving open space and environmental resources while providing a diverse housing stock and managing traffic congestion.

The Civic Initiative illuminated the need for public policy to guide our development choices on both a regional and state level. Markets by themselves will not produce balanced development. Tax-sharing, equalizing the attractiveness of urban and suburban public schools, coordinated transportation and land-use planning, and networked open space and environmental resource protection are among the efforts that require public leadership to restore and enhance the livability of our region. This is a propitious moment, when we can see that years of economic success have led us to forsake the qualities of place and the social ideals that are part of our New England heritage. "How we live" in the New England of this new century will depend on the choices we are making today. ■■■

Larissa V. Brown PhD, AICP, is a principal of Community Design Partnership, Inc. in Boston. She co-chaired the program committee for the Civic Initiative and is a member of its steering committee. She also serves as chair of the Cambridge Planning Board.

Editor's note: For more information on the Civic Initiative and updates on recent activities, go to: www.architects.org.

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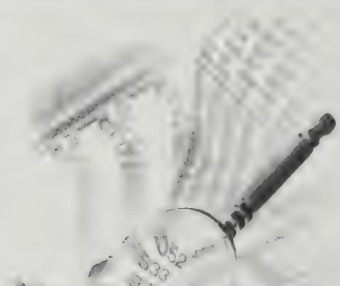
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Bridging the Gap

by Peter Vanderwarker



Anyone watching the construction of the Leonard Zakim Bunker Hill bridge since 1998 has seen two separate bridges, each hung from its own tower, reaching to each other across the Charles River, as if they were trying to shake hands. The southern half was finished in November 2000, and it hung there for five months, waiting for the northern span to approach. For a week last April, there was a 12-foot gap between these two huge structures, waiting for one last set of precast-concrete panels.

photo: © Peter Vanderwarker



Some students in a class I taught at Citizen Schools in Boston built their own cable-stayed bridge — a 20-foot span which supported a student easily at mid-span. They used their bodies as the towers and ran the cables carrying the main span over their shoulders. They could feel the distribution of forces in the cables, and they quickly realized they needed a lot of weight at the ends of their bridge to carry the mid-span and then figured out they could anchor the back spans with their feet.

photos © Hélène Vandenwaeter



Engineers did the same balancing act with concrete bridge towers and iso-tensioned stays.

Each stay was made up of strands of 5/16th-inch wire rope. The stays that reach the farthest must pull the hardest to carry the span, so they have as many as 72 strands. Shorter cables carrying less load contain as few as 14 strands. Each 5/16th-inch strand carries the same load — 30,000 pounds (30 kips) — and all strands are pulled one by one through a unique collar that distributes the 30 kips to each strand. The jack doing the tensioning was about the size of Manny Rodriques' bat.



photos © Peter Vandermeiden

Like the students, the real towers are flexible. Bridges are dynamic structures, and live loads from wind, snow, and cars cause them to bend and sway. If the towers are too stiff, the cables could easily be overstressed. The world-record width (183 feet) of the Zakim is both a blessing and a curse: The width keeps the span very stable, like a giant sheet of plywood. But placing 130-foot girders supporting the main span was tricky in the narrow basin over the Charles.

It is a shame that the marvelous physical handshake of the Zakim Bridge isn't as visible as the other famous spans over the Charles River. But from unlikely spots around town, one is treated to a web of engineering that is the first big mark of the 21st century on Boston.

Peter Vanderwarker is an architectural photographer in Newton. His fourth book, *The Big Dig: Reshaping an American City*, will be published by Little, Brown in September. He was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard and received Institute Honors from the American Institute of Architects.





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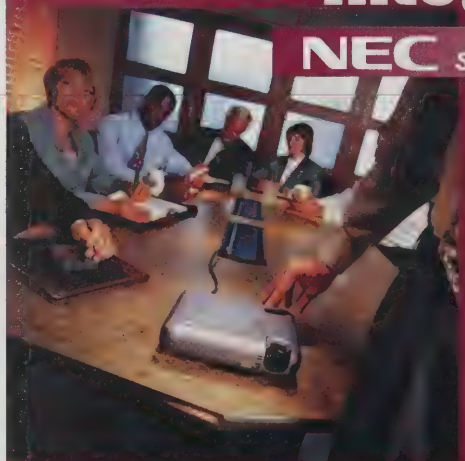
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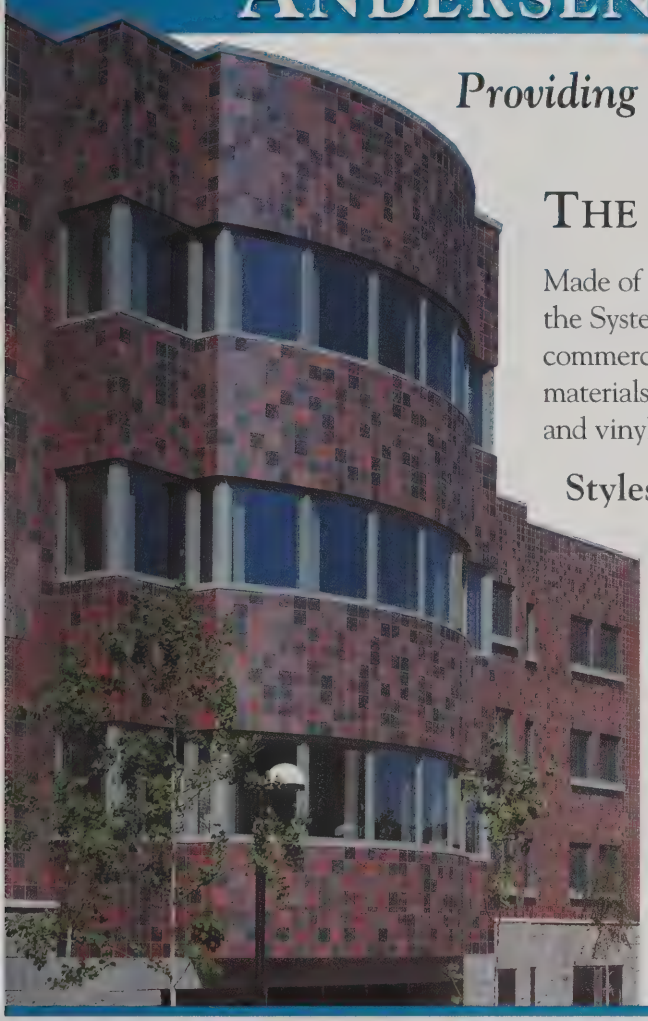
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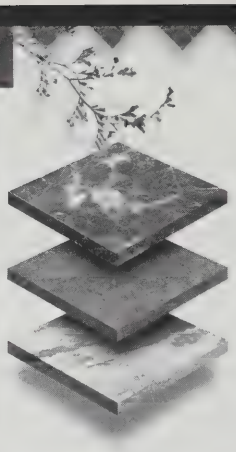
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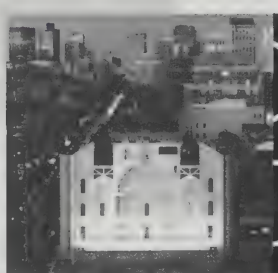
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Fear and Loathing of Density

by David Dixon FAIA

I have long been fascinated by the fear and loathing of density. I am not talking about bringing Manhattan to the older neighborhoods and traditional "Main Streets" of Boston, Cleveland, or Chicago…just bringing back the older neighborhoods and Main Streets of Boston, Cleveland, and Chicago. For many years, the phrase "urban density" was a curse, conjuring up images of crime, decay, and poverty. Robert Campbell FAIA, the *Boston Globe*'s architecture critic, helped rescue "urban"; today phrases like "urban vitality" and "urban character" conjure up images of lively cafés and restored historic townhouses. "Density" awaits rescue. When Charles Euchner, director of Harvard's Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, declared "density is good" at a recent public forum, community activists complained for two weeks that his comment was "anti-community." Typical of this sentiment was US Representative Michael Capuano's recent declaration that he did not want "a single additional housing unit" in his home community of Somerville, Massachusetts. "Why should my neighborhood suffer," he demanded, "so planners can have density?"

Why did Charles Euchner, knowing the inevitable reaction, tell the congressman and activists that density is good? After all, resistance to density is central to almost every major planning discussion going on today. So why should designers and planners continue to antagonize their client communities by promoting density? Because fear and loathing of density is ironic, counter-productive, dangerous…and based largely on myths.

Why ironic? Boston's most expensive neighborhoods are its densest neighborhoods, a pattern repeated in many cities. Somerville has lost 33 percent of its pre-1950 density, a "golden past" for which residents long. Which streets do Bostonians enjoy most? Those within walking distance of large pockets of density that support active street life.

Why counter-productive? Density is often the key to achieving the very qualities that make communities more livable. Three very different communities have recently made this discovery:

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, following a successful moratorium campaign to stop rapid development, a community-based task force spent a year preparing a plan to make neighborhoods around Kendall Square more livable. The resulting zoning supports the same mixed-use development level envisioned before the moratorium — including housing at densities ranging from row houses to apartment buildings (30-100 units to the acre) — but reshaped to enhance livability. Development consultant Pam McKinney estimates that several thousand new households will support the cafés and shops that will transform lifeless streets into walkable streets. "Density bonuses" provide incentives to replace industry with housing. Mixed-use development on a 20-acre site can unlock creation of a substantial public park. And ultimately new development can help pay for new transit that has already been planned but that currently lacks funding.

The city of Chicago was committed to densities below 30 units to the acre (single-family rowhouses), but found that higher densities were required to redevelop the notorious Cabrini-Green public housing into a new mixed-income neighborhood with enough units to house both former public-housing tenants and new middle- and upper-income residents — and to support a Main Street. Many of Chicago's beloved older neighborhoods represent densities 50 to 100 percent higher than 30 units per acre. The city has now embraced a mix of one- to three-family row houses, apartment houses, and lofts at densities ranging from 30 to 60 units per acre, and a new mixed-income neighborhood is taking shape.

Cleveland's vibrant Ohio City neighborhood initially opposed increasing density on a redeveloped public-housing site. Following a six-month planning effort, the community supported development of more than 500 units with a mix of one- to three-family rowhouses, lofts, and mid-rise apartments, at a density of more than 50 units to the acre, that provides the critical mass to support the community's goals for a revitalized Main Street, parks, and diversity.



A satellite view of density: Earth at night, November 2000

Why dangerous? Lack of density promotes sprawl, obstructs diversity, depletes Main Streets, and deprives communities of needed resources. If these sound like the words of a true believer, they are. As the pace of Boston's sprawl accelerates, the fact that household sizes have shrunk by 25 percent since 1970 means that it takes much more housing to return cities to their previous population levels; the alternative is to continue spilling ever-increasing numbers of people farther and farther out. Households are shrinking because families are changing: A developer in Cleveland, forced to build single-family houses for families that weren't seeking them, could not build apartments and lofts for the very diverse mix of people who were actually in the market for housing. Given the immense competition for retail dollars, it can easily take $10 to 20 million of new household income to support one new shop or café that will enliven a neighborhood Main Street; unless we want only very high-income cities, one block of revitalized Main Street requires 3,000 to 4,000 new households.

So why do people fear, if not loath, density? As cities declined and suburbs thrived following World War II, cities emulated suburbs, hoping to bring back jobs and the middle class. As many cities recover, five "density myths" continue to foster the sense that density degrades livability:

Myth: Density depletes open space. I have yet to see a potential park site developed instead for housing or any other use. Parks and development don't compete. In this era of public/private partnership, development is often used to create or maintain parks that the public sector cannot otherwise afford.

Myth: Density is ugly. There are many examples of badly scaled and inappropriately designed housing and commercial buildings that denigrate the character of charming older neighborhoods and Main Streets. The problem is insensitive design, not density. Ironically, beloved older buildings are far more likely to represent high density than newer buildings.

Myth: Density hurts property values. "Why should my property values suffer so that a developer can make more money?" No one's property values should suffer, and they don't. New investment — whether in the form of housing, which is invariably more expensive than existing housing, or jobs, which create more demand for nearby housing — raises property values.

Myth: Density causes gentrification. While development can be a symptom of gentrification, the failure to produce sufficient new housing to meet demand ultimately pushes prices up and displaces longtime residents. The solution is to build in affordability and diversity, not avoid building. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino's "Housing Strategy" notes that the region needs 15,000 new housing units annually to avoid steep housing inflation, more than twice the production over the 1990s. Building housing in older neighborhoods increases the options for affordable housing.

Myth: Density causes traffic congestion. Ironically, our past failure to provide density in the urban core creates the most troubling barrier to increasing density in the core, because people who live farther out are more dependent upon cars to reach the city's jobs and attractions. Architect Oliver Gillham AIA reports that, as sprawl has hit the Boston region over the past three decades, the total miles driven has increased 15 times faster than the population. Streets feel more congested because they *are* more congested. The answer is not less new housing in urban neighborhoods, inducing yet more sprawl, but managing the traffic we have and paying for the public transportation we need. The limited available sites in older neighborhoods are not the problem; they are mostly too small to support enough development to really aggravate traffic congestion.

The problem is not density, but how we shape density. The last 15 years have produced terrific examples of higher-density housing and commercial development that enrich neighborhoods in cities across America. We need to focus on learning from these examples and use them to build a new understanding — and perception — of density. ■■■

David Dixon FAIA is the principal-in-charge of planning and urban design at Goody, Clancy & Associates in Boston. He co-chaired workshops and the regional charrette for the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England.



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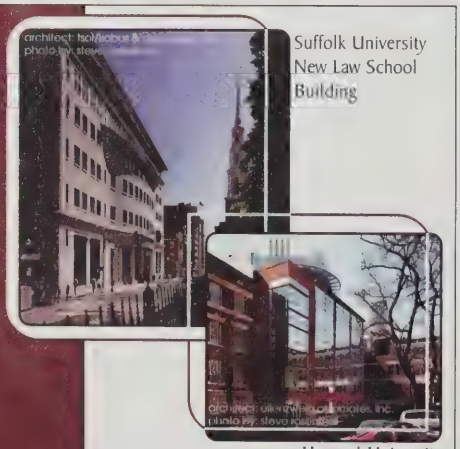
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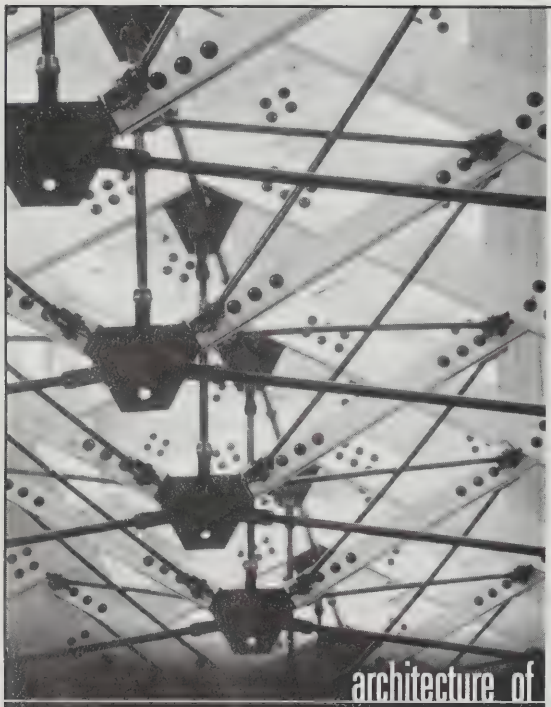
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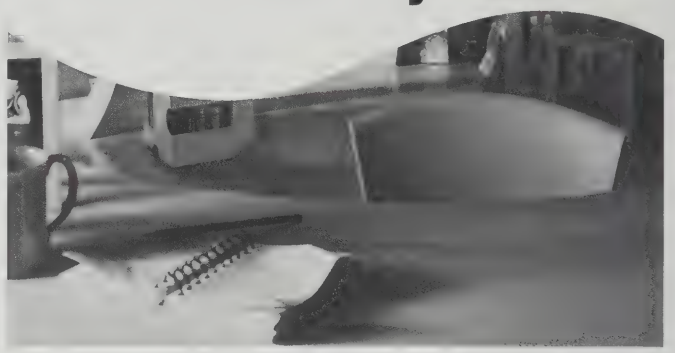
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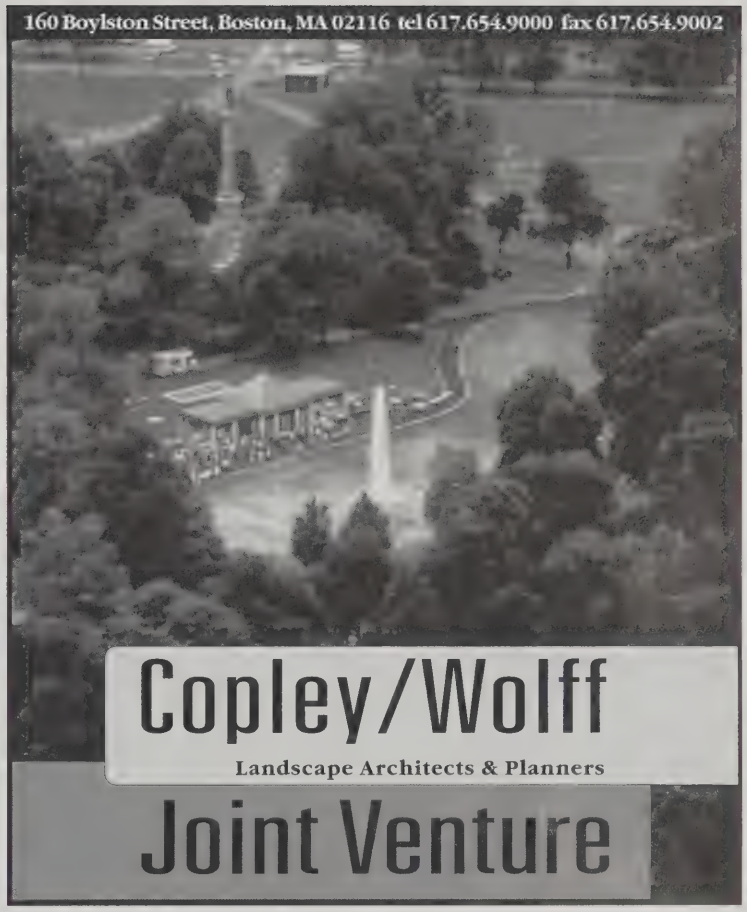
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Building the Urban Landscape

Anne Whiston Spirn ASLA, APA, talks with Hubert Murray AIA



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Landscape of play.
Park Citroën.
Paris, France.

Anne Whiston Spirn ASLA, APA, recently returned to Boston as a professor of landscape architecture and planning at MIT. From 1986 to 2000, she was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where she chaired the department of landscape architecture and planning and served as co-director of the urban-studies program. She is the author of *The Language of Landscape* (Yale University Press, 1998) and *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (Basic Books, 1984).

Hubert Murray AIA, RIBA, principal of Hubert Murray Architect + Planner in Cambridge; his work has included projects in the United States, Britain and East Africa. He has also taught architecture in London and Nairobi.

Murray: You've recently returned to Boston to join the faculty at MIT after 15 years at the University of Pennsylvania. What are some of the differences that you've notice on your return?

Spirn: Boston is booming and it's a stark contrast to Philadelphia. People here in Boston cannot appreciate the devastation that is occurring in many American cities because the problems here are of rising housing costs as opposed to falling housing costs, of increased population as opposed to decreased population. It's quite different from the problems of cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. The thing that struck me first was the strong economy, and the resulting flip side to familiar problems. Philadelphia today is facing the issue that Boston was struggling with in the early '80s when I last lived here here: what to do with thousands of vacant house lots.

The flip side of the problem is that Philadelphia — unlike Boston — is not experiencing market pressure to develop them right away, and so can take the time to rethink what should built, what should remain open, how to consolidate infrastructure — to rethink the future shape of the city. Boston doesn't have that luxury because of the strong economy. And that's one flip-side to Boston's strength. The other, of course, is experienced by many people who don't have the means to purchase a home or pay the rent in neighborhoods where they grew up and fully expected to stay. There are different problems here.

The other thing that struck me in coming back to Boston is how much has changed in terms of water quality in Boston Harbor. Today there are actually swimmable beaches, and it's a very striking difference.

Murray: You developed an agenda for your work in Boston that centered around those very issues: water, vacant lots, and public places. What happened to those interests when you went to Philadelphia?

Spirn: One of the reasons that I debated about going to Philadelphia was that I was loath to leave the work that I had begun here with Boston Urban Gardeners and with the Dudley Street neighborhood — I knew that exciting things were going to be happening here. I had been teaching studios at the Harvard Graduate School of Design that looked at the potential for vacant land in the city. In the course of that work, I discovered a correlation between large-scale vacant lands in inner-city neighborhoods and buried flood plains. I looked at a proposed development for one large vacant site. There was a reason why that land was vacant — and it wasn't due only to arson and disinvestment. There's a buried flood plain there. The developers laughed at me at first, but over the course of the studio with students documenting the history of the neighborhood, they became convinced and eventually modified their site plan accordingly.

But Philadelphia posed a great opportunity. Ian McHarg had been my mentor, and I was offered the opportunity to succeed him as the chair of the department of landscape architecture and planning at the University of Pennsylvania. As my husband said, it was the job of the decade.

When I got to Philadelphia, it turned out that the president of the university, Sheldon Hackney, had been in discussions with the Pew Charitable Trust about funding a greening project for West Philadelphia. They had been thinking about the project more as literally greening — developing community gardens and planting street trees. I persuaded them to broaden the project scope, so that the greening projects would be done within the context of larger environmental thinking.

It was natural for me to look at the flood plain/vacant land phenomenon in that area — I had actually done work there on the subject for my master's thesis in the '70s. The Mill Creek watershed drains almost two-thirds of West Philadelphia, and I immediately noticed the same phenomenon that I had seen in Boston: the vacant land is the low-lying land. These lots, of course, aren't the same as "missing teeth" and vacant corners, which occur within city blocks and are often the result of economic processes.

Murray: I've been working in a city just outside Boston, in a neighborhood where there are a lot of "missing teeth" — partly as a result of the city's "weed-and-seed" program — which is weeding out the drug dealers and then demolishing drug houses through a zero-tolerance policy. No sooner had the city started the program when it realized there were consequences — namely missing teeth in the neighborhoods.

Spirn: Right. But in a densely built-up neighborhood, this can also be a benefit — particularly if a lot is adopted by the adjoining owner. The ones in Philadelphia have been used for off-street parking and gardens, because the housing stock in Philadelphia tends to be very dense rowhousing with relatively few neighborhood parks.

Murray: Did anything come of your observations of the flood-plain phenomenon in Philadelphia?

Spirn: I started to launch the same kinds of proposals that I'd launched in Boston. The Philadelphia Water Department — just like Boston — had been under the gun from EPA to clean up their combined sewer overflows. The city had whole square blocks of vacant bottom land. Now, 15 years later — and it's taken 15 years — the Philadelphia Water Department has embraced these ideas and has made the Mill Creek neighborhood, where I've been focusing my work since 1987, a demonstration area. They will be developing a series of comprehensive storm-water management strategies and redeveloping vacant land as storm-water retention facilities that are also neighborhood resources.

photo: © Anne Whiston Spirn 2001



Ascent.
Hill of Remembrance, Forest Cemetery.
Stockholm.

Murray: What is interesting is that you haven't mentioned the Parks Department. You're talking about infrastructure here, which is the fundamental premise of your early book, *The Granite Garden* — that landscape is actually part of the infrastructure of cities.

Spirn: Yes, absolutely. I define landscape more broadly than many people might. To me, buildings and cities are landscape.

Murray: Your introduction to your more recent book, *The Language of Landscape*, seemed almost apologetic about that definition. I wondered if it was not a response to critics of *The Granite Garden*.

Spirn: Interestingly, the critics came from within the landscape architecture profession — not outside, where it was embraced as a comprehensive examination of the urban natural environment. The book came out at a time when there was a struggle within the profession between those who would emphasize landscape as art, and those who would emphasize the importance of ecological design. McHarg, in the '60s, had reintroduced the larger environmental concerns that had been present earlier in the field. But, as often happens, the disciples went overboard, and many landscape architects, particularly academics, became critical of garden design and that side of the profession. By the early 1980s, there was a swing of the pendulum back to the garden, back to landscape as art. And, of course, there were a few sane voices asking why must it be one or the other?

I think I underestimated the polemics in the argument. I wrote *The Granite Garden* out of aesthetic concerns as well as out of concerns for health, safety, and welfare. But it was read by some people as being more about health, safety, and welfare and about ecological design and planning, which therefore, because of the context of the debates that were going on at the time, must mean that it wasn't about art and aesthetics. I wrote an essay a couple of years later called "The Poetics of City and Nature," which was a response to that.

Murray: I suppose the architectural analogy would be the purely functionalist approach, which is deemed anti-aesthetic by some?

Spirn: Right.

Murray: Your observation about the flood plains, the low-lying lands, has a functional basis but there's a poetry in discerning the pattern.

Spirn: I actually wrote a poem as a prologue to *The Language of Landscape*. And then my editor said, "No one reads poetry, Anne." So I knocked it down into prose.

Murray: *The Language of Landscape* is in fact written beautifully. But then your subject matter is very literary. The metaphor you chose — language — and especially your chapter on poetics are interesting because they bring the discipline of linguistics to your own discipline, which makes us think about landscape in another way.

Spirn: I hope it brings my discipline, landscape, to linguistics as well. I was determined to trace the roots of language and of the shaping of landscape. The more I read about the origins of consciousness, the evolution of the human mind, and language, the more I became convinced that the shaping of landscape came before verbal language and that languages are reflective of the shaping of landscape. Once you start looking at grammar, at linguistic elements, and at poetics, you realize how deeply rooted in landscape our languages are. For instance, let's take the concept of "address." A gate is a form of address. Shrines are a form of address. Cemeteries are a form of address. Laying flowers on graves is the address of the living to the dead. And on the other hand, the tombstone is the address of the dead to the living.

Exploring literary metaphors helped me to be more disciplined in my thought. The value of this is not to show how erudite you are, but to think more clearly about your expression. So my purpose was to help landscape designers, be they professionals or amateurs, to express themselves more clearly and more powerfully. If landscape is language and if it's going to be useful, then it has to be useful not just in professional work, in high design. It also has to be useful in the vernacular. I put myself to the task of testing language and metaphor in a range of places — Versailles, Stockholm, Australia, Japan, and West Philadelphia. These ideas in landscape literature have to be equally valid to ordinary people who are shaping their landscapes, like community gardens, or their porches, their houses, their yards.

Murray: One of the advantages of being a stranger in a foreign land is that you look at that foreign land with a fresh set of eyes and the foreign land in turn gives you new ideas about home. You've also spent some time in Denmark?

Spirn: I lived on a very small farm in Denmark as an exchange student. It was a seminal experience because I had grown up in a suburban neighborhood in Cincinnati and I had spent a lot of time exploring the city. When I was growing up, the suburb that we lived in was in the process of expanding — so I'd had the experience of watching farmlands and woods being developed. Places where I had played seemed to disappear. But I hadn't developed an intimate understanding of the realities of natural processes — that was all something romantic, something to write poetry about.

Murray: You got chickens from the supermarket?

Spirn: Yes, of course, we bought our food in the supermarket. But that lack of understanding changed after living on a farm for a year, particularly on a farm where the family's income depended on the vicissitudes of weather. I remember we had a very wet spring and my Danish father walking out and just staring at the field that couldn't be plowed day after day after day, checking it out to see if it was dry enough to plow. I learned a lot from him — he had a very deep understanding of the soil and of weather. That experience is probably what led me to landscape architecture.

Murray: One of the things about the current foot-and-mouth disease in England is that it is likely to change the nature of the English landscape completely over the next 10 years as people do not restock their sheep and cattle. The land that we know as moorland both in myth and in literature will be forever changed. The landscape will change and, with it, the self-image and self-regard of English, Scottish, and Irish people. It will in a sense be the visible conclusion of an economic process that has been going on since World War II.

Spirn: Most people don't think about how rural landscapes that they admire are shaped by agricultural practices. What you say about foot-and-mouth disease is certainly true, although I think the British are aware of the fact that the hedgerow-and-small-field landscape that seems so archetypal of the English landscape is a function of the wool industry and is therefore a relatively recent phenomenon. In order to keep that landscape, one has to keep sheep; small fields with hedgerows aren't very well adapted to large farm machinery. More broadly, since the emergence of the European Union, sweeping changes have started throughout Europe on marginal agricultural lands within the EU member countries where they can no longer protect farming. These marginal agricultural lands are being abandoned and successional growth is occurring. I have several colleagues in Denmark who realized this about 10 years ago and got grants from the EU to study the phenomenon. It is a change that is going to have cultural, not just economic, reverberations and it's a landscape issue that countries are having to address now.

Murray: I'd like to go back to your interest in infrastructure and landscape. It's very much in the tradition of Frederic Law Olmsted who, in creating Boston's Emerald Necklace, was after all, simply draining the Fens. But he drained it in a very creative and imaginative way, which has left an indelible mark on our city. In the mid-19th century, one of the functions of the park, apart from the purely aesthetic, was to address the issue of public health — creating recreational spaces for people who couldn't get out of the city, to create light, fresh air, greenery.

What does public health through open space mean for us now at the beginning of the 21st century? We have reasonably fresh air. We have reasonably clean water. We can go to the beach on the weekend. We have two days off at the weekend. We have vacations. We supposedly have a 40-hour week. The thing that seems to be ailing our cities is a psychological problem — our inability to meet with one another, to establish what you and others have called "common ground." Now that fresh air and sunlight are reasonably adequate, is our new public-health mission to create a psychological center to our city? Is there something above and beyond the notion of green space, the park tradition established by Olmsted? What should be the framework for our thinking of new urban open spaces such as Boston's Central Artery?



photo: © Anne Whiston Spirn 2001

From wool to wood: Landscape of production. Glen Loy, Scotland.

Spirn: You're certainly right in characterizing Olmsted's vision as a social vision that embraced health and safety as well as aesthetics and social interaction. But even though we may have relatively clean air and clean water compared to the 19th century, these issues still need constant vigilance. So I wouldn't put them aside — we need to continue to work on them along with these larger social issues. I've been working mainly with public landscapes in neighborhoods, as opposed to downtown public places. Downtown public places belong to everybody in a city and then sometimes become iconic — they begin to represent the city in the minds of people across the country, even around the world. The Central Artery is certainly one of those kinds of public places that has the potential to become iconic. It's probably already iconic in terms of the Big Dig, which in itself has become a tourist attraction.

The work I've done over the past 17 years has really been about integrating social processes with natural processes — and perhaps that has some application to the Artery. How do you integrate the processes of working with people in a neighborhood and working with people in public agencies at the local, state, or even federal level? Sometimes designers focus too much on static features as opposed to processes. So if one thinks about the space not as something static but as something dynamic that intensifies ongoing processes — whether they be hydrological, climatic, social, or cultural processes — the result will be dynamic places.

Murray: To what extent can an outsider pick up on that?

Spirn: An outsider can definitely pick up on it. It requires reading the landscape, looking for patterns, and then asking questions.

Any given place has a characteristic physiography, climate, and interaction of natural processes that give rise to an enduring structure of that landscape — a structure that existed prior to human settlement and that continues to exist after human settlement. It's very important to recognize that enduring landscape structure — you could call it "deep structure" or "enduring context" — and to develop plans and designs that are congruent with that structure instead of working against it. If you do work against it, not only do you lose aesthetic opportunities, but you also incur greater costs of maintaining the structure of human settlement.

Murray: That seems to summarize your ideas about the relationship between teaching and practice, research and practice, which are integral to your work. You couldn't do one without the other.

Spirn: No, I couldn't do one without the other. I use practice to develop theory, and theory to refine what I do in practice, and then practice to test the theory. I certainly couldn't be a scholar without practicing. ■■■

Editor's note:
For more information on Anne Whiston Spirn's work, go to: www.upenn.edu/wplp and www.thewolftree.com

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Letter from Sydney (Post-Marked Venice)

by Bridget Smyth



courtesy Sydney Olympic Co ordination Authority

I am reminded as I sit today in Venice that the culture and built form of a city serve to reflect that city — its values, its rituals — back to its people. In Sydney, we campaign to save buildings just 50 years old and we strive to create innovative icons to our time; in Venice, the restoration of 12th- to 19th-century buildings flourishes and contemporary intervention is seldom found. Somewhere between Venice and Sydney is Boston — a city able to absorb contemporary routines of travel and commerce in its urban fabric while maintaining a link with its own past. As waterfront cities, Boston, Sydney, and Venice have many similarities in culture despite differences in urban form.

This letter from Sydney is penned from two perspectives: from my current assignment in Venice where I am researching the effects of tourism and cultural events — biennales, carnivals — on this ancient city's public spaces; and from my recent experience of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, for which I became director of urban design after living in Boston until 1996. The Sydney Olympics supplied a vivid legacy of urban development as well as some less tangible galvanic stirrings of national pride that are the substance of what we in Sydney value as a culture. At the time, we, the Games organizers, felt we were running our own marathon, with moments of exhaustion, exasperation and, finally — upon staging "the best Games ever" — exhilaration. At least one of those three sentiments would feel familiar to any city undergoing major urban change, such as Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are the world's largest urban event. They have the capacity to catalyze and transform cities, even though few host cities have managed to produce lasting legacies that improve their physical and economic environments. Yet we all know the impact of Barcelona's 1996 Olympic Games on its host city. In fact, without the Games, Barcelona would not hold the pre-eminence that it does in our mind for its innovative contemporary architecture and design leadership. While the regeneration of Barcelona's urban environment and infrastructure was overdue post-Franco, the Games catalyzed it and enabled millions to experience and see it.

With Barcelona in mind, we in Sydney wanted to seize the opportunity of the Olympics to accelerate urban development programs and project Sydney, Australia, to the world. We had the money, the widespread public expectation to accomplish improvements, and a base of political and professional support. The simultaneity of these circumstances would carry us beyond images of Paul Hogan and Crocodile Dundee and demonstrate instead that we are a clever country, environmentally conscious, culturally diverse, and intent upon reconciliation with our indigenous peoples.

For a country of 19 million and a city of 4 million, the scale of the event was overwhelming. Some 28 sports drawing 16,000 athletes and officials from 200 countries; 5,000 media people; and 500,000 visitors per day generated a total "load" of 8.5 million people and 36.4 million trips on public transportation. In my view, one of the most important legacies of hosting the Games is a new attitude about our built environment. In Sydney, this is felt in two areas: the development and

onsolidation of ecologically sustainable architecture; and the heightened awareness of public space s being important to our culture (accompanied by heightened awareness of the role of designers in reating such space).

Our bid to host the Sydney Olympics was underpinned by a mission to be "green." Trumpeting "the Green Games," the bid committee developed a Games program that not only promoted sustainable lesign, but also demonstrated a commitment to nvironmental sustainability in transport, waste emoval, and the many pragmatic aspects of event nanagement. Rather than mandate strict rules, the Environmental Guidelines for the Sydney 2000 Olympics" provided designers with performance tandards. A new benchmark for sustainable lesign has been created by the building, landscape, nd infrastructure completed over the four-year, US$7.8-billion construction program. Architects ave turned what could have been stringent onstraints into tools of inspiration. Buildings open o the sky to ensure natural ventilation, new naterials are used to enhance natural lighting, ecycled materials add texture, and solar panels go eyond mere function to become decorative, vivid lemonstrations of environmental commitment. oday, the roofs of the Olympic Village constitute he largest solar-powered suburb in the southern emisphere, while 19 light towers on Olympic laza, each 120-feet high, are powerful expressions f solar-powered and environmentally sustainable ustralian architecture.

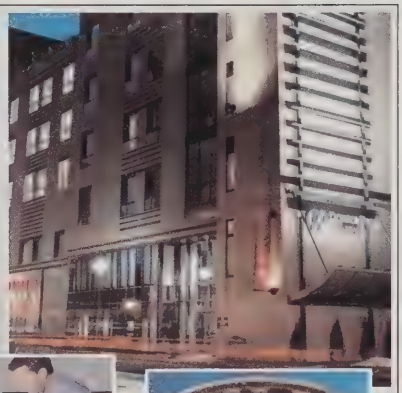
None of this development would have been possible vithout a massive remediation process to clean up Homebush Bay, the site of more than half the ompetition venues. Sixteen kilometers from Sydney, Homebush Bay was a derelict, contaminated, and nderused industrial wasteland, the site of a former rickworks, slaughterhouse, racecourse and, most ecently, garbage dump. State-of-the-art remediation rocesses cleaned the site; in fact, designers made emediation a visible, declarative process. Landscape rchitects sculpted the surrounding 460-hectares arklands known as Millennium Parklands into culptural forms amid sensitive wetland environments. The Homebush Bay site now stands as model of "brownfield" site transformation into community asset as well as an international ports and recreational venue.

The new appreciation for public space and its design grew from Sydney's US$460-million upgrade of city streets and public spaces. The new work shifted the balance between pedestrians and vehicles in favor of the pedestrian, while basic patterns of vehicular circulation remain operable. The result is a more livable, contemporary, and visually exciting city in which to live, play, shop, and work.

At Homebush Bay, the agglomeration of 14 venues created a unique Olympic precinct and a public space of a scale unprecedented in Australia. The public now understands better that design professionals are shapers not only of buildings but also of systems that support our lives. The staging of the Paralympics has catalyzed a new sensitivity in the design of accessible environments. As in our mission to promote sustainability, designers were challenged to meet or exceed standards for accessibility rather than adhere to strict rules. The resulting public spaces are accessible to all, and were further enhance by a public-art program modeled on North American collaborative processes.

Just like the athletes, the members of the Olympics planning team are all a little tired and exhausted after our race. As I take a break enjoying the Italian pace of life and studying the Venetian love of spectacle, I see our efforts in Sydney as part of an ancient human impulse, a long continuum of festivals and celebrations. Hearing reports that Boston, New York, Cincinnati, Dallas, and Tampa are interested in hosting the 2012 Games, I wish them well. With the right mix of leadership, skill, realism and vision, the event will provide them a unique opportunity to accelerate urban development programs that have lasting resonance with elusive cultural values, long after the last national flag is waved. ■■■

Bridget Smyth is an architect and urban designer and is the director of urban design for the Olympic Co-ordination Authority in Sydney, Australia. Following her master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, she was senior urban designer on the Boston Central Artery/Tunnel Project with Wallace Floyd Associates. She is currently the recipient of an Australian Fellowship and is residing in Venice.





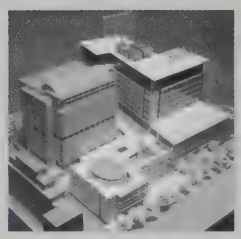
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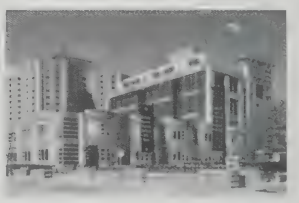
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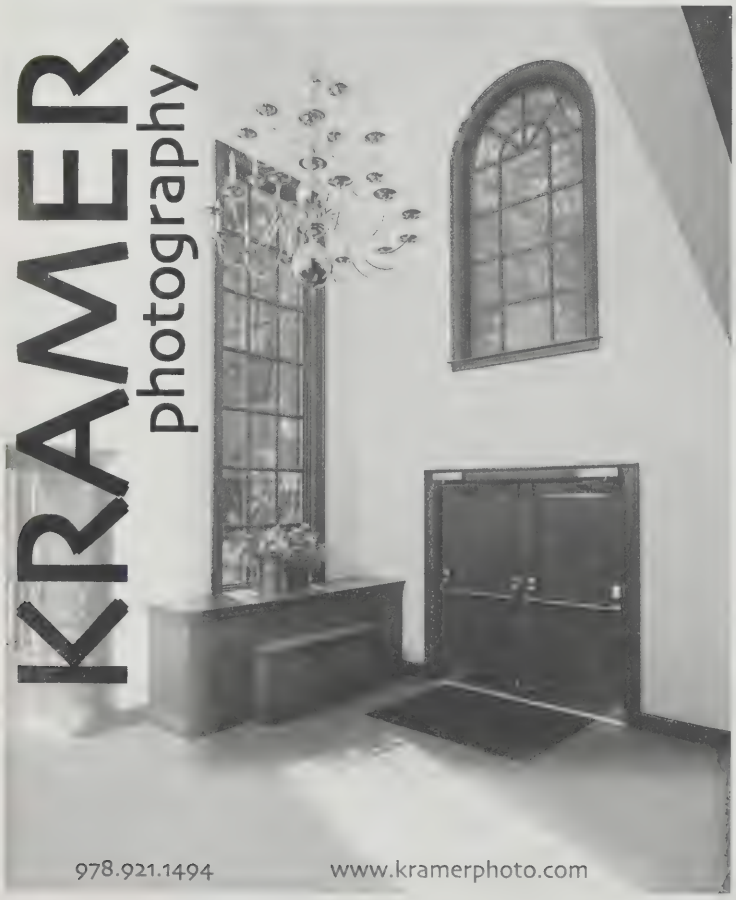
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Covering the issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Happy birthday, Mr. Johnson... Robert Stern FAIAs pays Philip Johnson FAIA an eloquent — if brief — 95th-birthday tribute in June's *Vanity Fair*. A fitting place for this ever-evolving master of styles and style. From Arata Isozaki to Zaha Hadid, Johnson has launched the careers of many prominent architects of the century. A photo from Johnson's 90th-birthday bash features his extended family. (This same photo was also published in *Architecture*'s May 2000 "Power" issue.) Good luck with those candles! We look forward to the party at 100.





The Bauhaus is back... The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities' four-year restoration of the Gropius House is complete, announces Boston's *artsMEDIA* (May 15-June 15, 2001). Originally designed by Walter Gropius in 1938, this iconic, humble house brought Modern architecture to "a hill overlooking an orchard in a classic New England landscape." As writer Ellen Howards explains, this house is significant for the way Gropius emphasized connections between indoors and out, employed regional materials in untraditional ways, choreographed movement of light and space, and efficiently addressed utilitarian needs. Howards takes her readers on an insider's tour. For the scores of us trained under the ghost of this legendary educator, her references are strangely informal. She writes, "Walter's wife, Ise, loved gardening and did most of it herself," and "Walter and Ise both used cologne." Who knew? As Howards brings this legend down to earth, she reminds us that if we haven't been to the house since a school field trip or the last time the in-laws visited, it's time to go again.

"King of the hills"... Nearly 50 years after his death, R.M. Schindler's work has finally gained respect and acclaim. To coincide with LA MoCA's traveling exhibit, "The Architecture of R.M. Schindler," Sam Durant, Michael Maltzan, Roy McMakin, Grant Mudford, Wolf Prix, Michael Rotondi, Judith Sheine, and Julius Shulman each contribute to the cover subject of the May 2001 *Art Forum*. This collection of essays, eloquently written and elegantly photographed, alternately addresses Schindler's Viennese training; his immigration to the Hollywood Hills; his interpretations of Modernism; the inspiration (and competition) he drew from Loos, Wright, and Neutra; his lifestyle and friendships; and his influence on California's current generation. Barry Sloane speculates on this belated recognition and provides a map and an illustrated, annotated guide to a driving tour of Schindler's extant work. Of 500 designed projects, approximately 150 were built, most with modest budgets, inexpensive materials, and difficult sites, nearly all in Southern California. Much the opposite of current globetrotting trends, Schindler's architecture makes an inspiring catalogue of what's possible through a long-developed, intimate knowledge of the cultural and physical landscapes of a particular place and time.

Neither shaken nor stirred... No news here, just a note of equal billing. Bill Steigerwald interviews "urban studies legend Jane Jacobs on gentrification, the New Urbanism, and her legacy" for the conservative libertarian journal *Reason* (June 2001). With extra emphasis on free markets, Jacobs stays true to her well-known message, long championed by liberals. A toast to Jacobs! Vibrant, walkable, livable cities should be on the bipartisan agenda.

Sprawl watch notebook... These two articles don't come packaged together, but they should. In "Urban Sprawl" (*National Geographic*, July 2001), John G. Mitchell's text and Sarah Leen's photographs remind us of overall issues, update statistics, and argue that America has made little headway since sprawl started making headlines a decade ago despite a rising tide of smart-growth advocates. For example, "since 1969, the number of cars and trucks in the US has grown twice as fast as the population" and our expanding communities now take up four times more land then they did in 1950. Then, in "Is This Your Beautiful House?" (*Fast Company*, July 2001), author Ron Lieber and photographer James Smolka develop these overall themes through two striking case studies, both under construction on the outskirts of Denver: Highlands Ranch and Prospect New Town. If Highlands Ranch is suburbia on evil steroids, Prospect New Town is renegade New Urbanism without neo-traditional kitsch. Lieber provocatively writes, "For all the amazing innovations in almost every industry, there has been no corresponding creative boom in American urban and community development." While considering that, check out the pictures; in both articles they're well worth more than their requisite thousand words. ■■■



Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches architecture at Smith College.

Lavish courtyard joins two worlds....beautifully.... with ARRISCRAFT STONE



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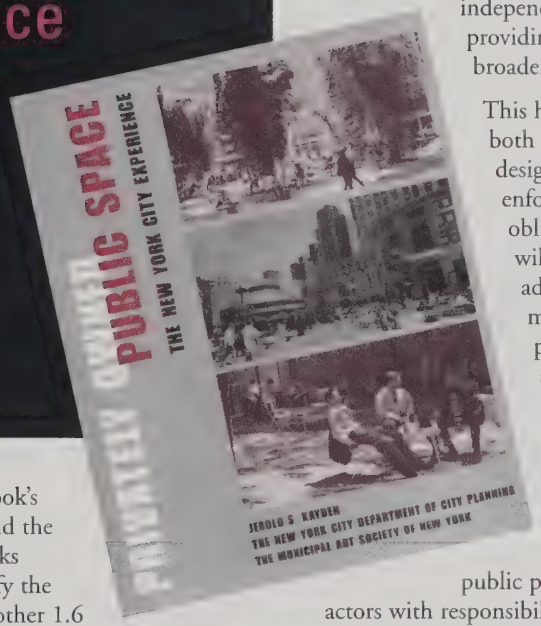
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Books

Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience

by Jerold S. Kayden
John Wiley & Sons, 2000

Reviewed by Matthew J. Kiefer



s American cities increasingly seek ways privatize responsibility for creating pieces the public realm, they depart from the ssical paradigm of city building in which public sector builds streets, utilities, parks, d civic amenities, and the private sector fills spaces in between. An early, novel, and fluential example of this trend is New York ty's 1961 zoning ordinance, which granted operty owners a floor-area bonus in change for providing quasi-public plazas arcades. In his new book, Jerold Kayden, a wyer, planner, and assistant professor at the arvard Graduate School of Design, examines fruits of this now 40-year-old ordinance.

ie 1961 zoning resolution allowed velopers in specified districts to increase the owed size of a new building by as much as o to 10 times the area of any public plaza arcade that they included in the project; is additional area is known as a "floor-area nus." As the ordinance has evolved, more ingent and more detailed standards have en developed, and more public amenities ve been required. This increased complexity s required more discretionary review and ore attention to enforcing owner obligations.

orking with New York's Department of ty Planning and the Municipal Art Society, yden compiled the first comprehensive tabase of the city's privately owned public ace. This compilation revealed that a total just over 3.5 million square feet of public ace — equivalent to 30 average New York ty blocks, or to the section of Central Park ow 64th Street — was leveraged by the nstruction of approximately 16 million uare feet of bonus floor area — equivalent 1.6 World Trade Centers. So, to grossly oversimplify the book's central question, did the creation of 30 blocks of open space justify the construction of another 1.6 World Trade Centers?

Evaluating each of the more than 500 privately owned public spaces created under the ordinance, Kayden concludes that a high proportion of these spaces are of only marginal value, due mostly to a lack of clearly articulated standards. Worse yet, nearly half of the spaces are out of compliance even with the often inadequate design, maintenance, and operational requirements that apply to them.

The question posed above of course presumes that additional density is *per se* bad and that additional open space is *per se* good. But the reality is more complex. Additional density supports retail uses, rapid transit, and street life. Conversely, the value of these open spaces is not based on their size but rather on more subtle, context-driven factors such as solar orientation; pedestrian patterns; placement of plantings, movable seats and other amenities; and the relationship to host buildings and other nearby spaces.

The book's methodology and conclusions raise provocative questions which reverberate beyond Manhattan. Although the city of Boston has few incentive zoning provisions outside the Midtown Cultural District, quasi-public open spaces are often mandated as conditions of development approval for large-scale projects such as the Fan Pier. The private developers who are the creators and stewards of these spaces may perceive a value in adding amenities for the users of their own buildings, but they cannot be expected to have an independent commitment to providing benefits to the broader public.

This highlights the need both for clearly articulated design standards and for enforcement of legal obligations. Are we willing to bear the administrative burden of making sure these public amenities are appropriately designed and maintained? Does the promise of attractive public benefits distort the public approval process? Is it good public policy to burden private actors with responsibility for creating and maintaining public amenities?

One hopes that these questions resonate with Boston's Surface Artery Commission, which is charged with overseeing the development of parcels created by the submerging of the Central Artery highway. The Commission is looking for ways to shift the burden of designing, building, and maintaining Surface Artery open space onto developers and abutting property owners. This goes beyond incentive zoning, requiring private actors to create and maintain a truly public resource.

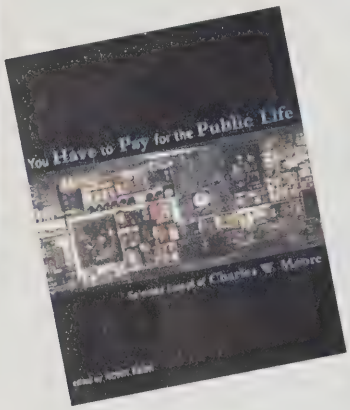
More fundamentally, ever since the decade-old agreement to maintain 75 percent of the Surface Artery as open space, environmental advocates have treated the open space simplistically as a commodity to be maximized. One of the many lessons of *Privately Owned Public Space* is that quantity is much less important than quality and context. It is not clear that a linear park winding through central Boston will be an important public amenity; it is possible that public (or private) resources would be better spent completing the intermittent Harborwalk a short distance away. Kayden's landmark study provides a conceptual framework for addressing these questions from both sides of the debate. One thus hopes the book's conclusions vex both developers and open-space advocates equally. ■■■

Matthew J. Kiefer is a partner at the Boston law firm of Goulston & Storrs, where he practices real estate development and land-use law.

You Have to Pay for the Public Life: Selected Essays of Charles W. Moore

Edited by Kevin Keim
MIT Press, 2001

Reviewed by
James McCown



Of the many charms of the late Charles Moore, perhaps the greatest is his sense of self deprecating humor. Twentieth-century architecture is filled with seriousness and self-importance, with designers thinking, "This is it! This will save the world!" By contrast, in the early 1980s when Moore was designing a new museum for Dartmouth College, instead of referring grandly to the two final proposals, he dubbed them merely "Tweedle Dee" and "Tweedle Dum." Like his demeanor, his writing was suffused with modesty and an instinct that architecture, like everything else, is subject to fashion, and that each project is not necessarily Ictinus designing the Parthenon: "I take jobs that...call not for pearls that will ring down through the ages but for something that was pleasant in the circumstances. Every building does not have to be wildly important."

This collection of Moore's essays spans 41 years, from his days as an *enfant terrible* architecture instructor until his death at 68 in 1993. Moore's career was a blessing to the profession. But, unfortunately, this book does him a disservice with the decision to present the essays chronologically. This starts the book with the fledgling, not-yet-focused writing of a 27-year-old and ends with a somewhat rambling piece about Austin and Salt Lake City. Like a Whitman's chocolate, the best stuff is in the middle, including the seminal 1965 essay "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," in which Moore eloquently calls for "the kind of monumentality that occurs when the Establishment requires buildings more important than others...when skilled architects give physical form to this requirement... and when public imagination confirms this importance..."; and "Eleven Agonies and One Euphoria," a trenchant 1971 critique of the radicalism that was then sweeping many elite architecture schools. Another problem is the book's "mystery writer" — one presumes that the lengthy introductory essay and brief paragraphs preceding each chapter were written by editor Kevin Keim, but we're given no indication of this, nor for that matter who Kevin Keim is or why he is qualified to edit this book. (He is the director of the Charles W. Moore Center for the Study of Place in Austin, Texas.)

The "Disneyfication of America"? Moore was writing about it in 1965 and basically saying, relax — we need *more* fantasy in architecture, not less. Learning from the vernacular? Instead of focusing on architects' usual geographic muses — Japan, Italy — Moore looked to our misunderstood neighbor to the south, Mexico, and found much to be inspired by.

Moore the puckish, Moore the irreverent, Moore the deflator of architectural pomposity — it's all here. It's just harder to appreciate because of the half-baked package it's wrapped in.

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



City Transformed: Urban Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century

by Kenneth Powell
Neues Publishing, 2000

Reviewed by
Charles Redmon FAIA

Kenneth Powell braves to ask the question that many architects, urban planners, sociologists, economists, and politicians only ask themselves, quietly before they go to sleep at night: What will the city become in the third millennium? And what role will architecture and design play in shaping the city of the 21st century? *City Transformed* is a glossy attempt to address these issues.

Powell's thesis is that the "prime role of the modern city is as center of consumption rather than production, and that recent architecture reflects that reality." He follows by postulating that it is mainly signature architects, in cahoots with "mayors on the make," who can correctly shape the future of cities. One has to question such a sweeping and presumptuous statement.

Powell goes on to discuss many of the aspirations that have shaped the city in the last century: livability and a richer public realm; reducing density; preservation and infill; vast rebuilding; and balanced work/live communities. In contrast he presents elements of new thinking that are shaping new global communities: concentration of extreme density (as in Asian megalopolises); virtual places and global media; sustainability; reclaiming outdated infrastructure; new modes of transportation; and use of culture and art. Predictably, he suggests that balancing the old goals with new sensibilities and new knowledge may resolve the future plight of cities.

To build his case, Powell offers 25 city case studies from North America, Asia and Europe (Africa and Australia lose again) Although Powell's examples are uneven in presentation text and images, they do offer diverse windows into major transitions of cities and provide a useful reference guide to recent urban design. They are grouped under four general themes: healing and rebuilding; extending and infilling; taming transportation; and enriching with art. Unfortunately, in many cases, the design details of architectural superstars are more celebrated than the local development process, the role of public-private players, the planning framework, or the social agenda. For architects, being titillated by the beautiful designs of Norman Foster, Renzo Piano, SOM, Cesar Pelli, Terry Farrell, and Helmut Jahn is a wonderful experience. However, one would have hoped for more content over form in a book bearing such a provocative title.

Powell believes that the role of the architect at the start of the new millennium will be either that of a salvage merchant, economically pulling together the resources of a place, or that of a magician, synthesizing fantasy, commerce, entertainment, and public life into new forms of urban space. If this grimly narrow perception proves true, then any access to equity for the world's urban disenfranchised hangs by tenuous threads.

Charles Redmon is a principal of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a former president of the Boston Society of Architects.

om the Puritans to the rojects: Public Housing nd Public Neighbors

y Lawrence J. Vale
arvard University Press, 2000

eviewed by
ane Georgopulos AIA

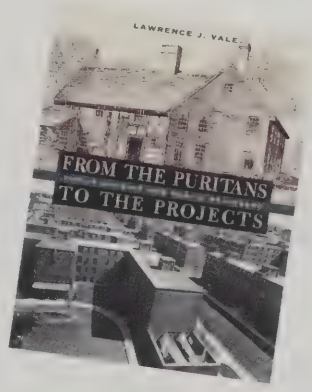
he transformation of public-using policy from the almshouse the sophisticated public-private rtnerships of the Boston Housing uthority is the subject of this sightful and readable history that plores the lurches and retreats at have characterized efforts to ovide housing to alleviate a unting range of social conditions

wrence Vale, an associate profes-r of urban studies and planning MIT, has divided his portrait of blic housing into two main ctions: the "prehistory" of public using and a detailed case study the Boston Housing Authority. he story begins with the religious nviction of the Puritan settlers to sist the worthy poor and contin-s with 19th-century combined cilities for criminals, juvenile fenders, "lunatics," and the eeble-minded." More recent story includes housing for defense orkers and veteran housing, and forcement of anti-discrimination ws rising from the civil-rights ovement. We come to appreciate e sometimes uneasy alliances that forged among federal, state, and cal elected officials, the electorate, ndlords, bureaucracies, the home-ilding industry, and the poor d their advocates. By analyzing e housing policies that are imple-ented in spite of deeply held cietal prejudices, we can see the ots of cultural conflicts as they ay out in the streets and ighborhoods of the city. These ejudices come in many forms ch as the preference for single-mily home ownership instead of ntal apartments; discomfort with nancial support for those who e perceived to be capable of work t are unemployed; grudging option of what is thought to be ocialist approach to housing oduction in a free-market economy; segregation of populations because of age, race, and family composition through tenant selection policy and patronage. Vale offers a largely evenhanded discussion of these ideological conflicts, with an overlay of his own view of where the moral high ground lies.

Vale had a tough job in presenting a vast subject at uniform depth. Many stories can be told about the history of public housing, but the author has exerted admirable restraint in selecting those that best illustrate his thesis: that Americans are collectively ambivalent about how to house the poor, but incremental strategies that remove high concentrations of the poor and consistently enforce fair-housing laws will ultimately lead to success.

To the uninitiated, the subject matter can be complex. The discussion turns technical in its explanations of income limits and ceiling rents or the advantages and disadvantages of vouchers instead of project-based Section 8 subsidy. One criticism of the work is the quality of graphics: Site plans can be difficult to decipher, and captions are sometimes too small. But the book's extensively footnoted and indexed chapters refer to many important source materials and contribute to its value as a professional resource.

Diane Georgopulos AIA is an architect with the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and serves as vice chair of the AIA Housing Committee.



Comeback Cites: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival

by Paul S. Grogan
and Tony Proscio
Westview Press, 2000

Reviewed by
Annie C. Harris

America's cities are dying. For as long as I can remember, there has been a growing sense of hopelessness, a growing conviction that the problems of poverty, drugs, and crime will forever mire our cities in defeat, no matter how much money is thrown at our urban centers. Now along come Paul Grogan and Tony Proscio and their new book, *Comeback Cities*, which makes the case that these problems are not intractable and that there are even many new trends and tools that offer great hope for the future of cities.

The authors describe four pro-city trends: the rise in grassroots, nonprofit community development corporations; new capital investment in the inner cities due to factors ranging from the Community Reinvestment Act to the discovery that inner-city retail markets can be very profitable; new strategies for dealing with crime; and recent reforms in national welfare, public housing and, currently under review, education. The authors contend that these factors have created more positive changes in the inner cities in the past 25 years than all the billions of federal dollars invested since the Great Depression.

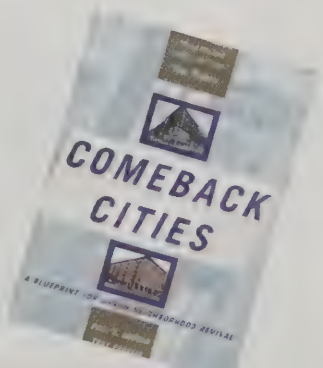
The authors offer some controversial correlations to explain recent urban successes. For example, they argue that immigration plays a key role in turning cities around and suggest that struggling cities might do well to attract new immigrants. They suggest that school vouchers could be critical tools in city revitalization because they provide choices that are currently only available to the affluent. And they argue that eliminating poverty should not be the foremost goal in urban revitalization because we need to recognize that safe, pleasant inner-city communities can be successful even if they are poor.

Although city dwellers are the book's obvious audience, even the most ardent rural resident can learn from its message. For years, America's urban centers have been emptying out into the suburbs. If we continue to think "it's too bad about those inner cities, but they don't really matter to me," we cannot hope to deal with sprawl. Development cannot be completely stopped, but it can be redirected, perhaps most logically into our urban centers. Unless we find ways to have our cities "come back" — making them attractive, safe, interesting, and desirable places to live — the assault on our countryside will proceed unabated, moderated only slightly by the occasional recession.

Occasionally controversial, the authors' ideas are intriguing and well-grounded in practical thinking and first-hand experience. Grogan and Proscio have captured the core of a promising national "blueprint for urban neighborhood revival" — even though they themselves are quick to point out that the results are not yet conclusive. There is no "quick fix" for rebuilding cities, but *Comeback Cities* makes a convincing case that recent urban trends are not passing flukes but can be the harbingers of effective urban revitalization.

Annie C. Harris is the executive director of the Essex National Heritage Commission. She was previously the executive director of The Salem Partnership, a public-private coalition of business leaders dedicated to economic development in Salem, Massachusetts, and the surrounding region.

Note: *Comeback Cities* is available from the BSA, 617-951-1433 x221





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Other Voices by Anne Stetson

The Emerald Necklace



photo: © Michael Berger 2000

My husband persuaded me to move from Manhattan to Boston some years ago by promising we could have a dog (New York City dogs are suspiciously lacking in muscle tone). But when we moved, I entered a long period of mourning for, among other things, Central Park. I had always been careful to live close to the Park so that it would be available for spontaneous and soul-replenishing meanderings, and over the years I had come to know and depend on its whimsy and expansive beauty and to view Frederick Law Olmsted as a hero of no small proportions. Where was the Central Park of Boston, I wondered?

We lived initially in the Back Bay, then migrated over to Beacon Hill and, as the attentive parents of a Weimaraner puppy, were obliged to explore all green spaces available. Soon the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Common, and the Public Garden became our daily stomping grounds, but it wasn't until we discovered the rest of the Emerald Necklace, and particularly the Arnold Arboretum (also an Olmsted design), that we felt really at home. I have since learned that the park system was constructed between 1878 and 1895 as Boston's answer to New York's Central Park.

At the Arboretum you can lose yourself in the mirage of an English country estate — happily a democratized version — thanks to exquisitely placed hillocks and copses, lily ponds and paths, and the many species that compose this tree museum. On a fine autumn day that will make your heart ache with the beauty of the amber foliage against a bigger, more cerulean sky than you ever expected to see in a city, everybody turns out — Hispanic families from Jamaica Plain setting up camp for the day, older Chinese couples taking their daily constitutionals, black families letting the afternoon unfold as it will, earnest botanists sporting safari hats and oversized notebooks: Boston in microcosm. We quickly designated the Arboretum our top destination. I have walked through two pregnancies up and over Bussey Hill, where I have sketched the birch trees on its eastern slope, lingered over the lavish number of species of lilacs on Lilac Walk, crosscountry-skied on those rare occasions when Boston snows are adequate, and breathed in deeply the poem that is Olmsted's park.

Over time, we've canvassed each pendant of the Emerald Necklace, so called due to the topographical view of a park system carefully strung over five miles and 2,000 acres of parks, boulevards, and parkways. Each has its own personality quirks, but the common theme of connecting community with community pervades them all. Stringing from the Common (originally a cow pasture and now home to a baseball field, sundry statues, a bandstand, and the Frog Pond), along the Public Garden (an exquisite Lilliputian English garden), the Commonwealth Mall, the Fens (where my Guatemalan friend George drives in from Roslindale to tend one of the victory gardens), through the Muddy River, Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, and finally Franklin Park (now less a park than a golf course and zoo), this intricate public park system links Chinatown with Dorchester, Beacon Hill with Jamaica Plain.

And this is no serendipity: Olmsted's social ideal informed his artistry every step of the way. Not only did he espouse the view that city folk need pastoral landscapes to restore their spiritual and mental equilibrium, but he also envisioned the parks as places where people of all classes, colors, and religions could share a common and uncompetitive ground and recognize community among and in spite of themselves.

To this day, the common places that compose the Emerald Necklace serve this purpose. I am cheered in any of the parks to hear languages other than mine: always Spanish, often Hindi, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and others. Although my children are growing up in a predominantly white (albeit eccentric) neighborhood on Beacon Hill, their daily perambulations to the Common and the Public Garden, and our weekend jaunts to the Arboretum and Franklin Park, teach them that Boston — their world for now — embraces a multiplicity of cultures and races. Olmsted divined that our city would grow increasingly crowded yet at the same time atomized according to culture and race, and he (and the Boston Parks Commission) came to our rescue. The Emerald Necklace endows us with not only physical, but also spiritual beauty in affording us equal footing in spaces whose air we breathe in deeply, knowing that they belong to us all. ■■■

Anne Stetson is a lawyer and poet living in Boston with her husband and three children, the oldest of which has four legs.

Editor's note: For more information about the Emerald Necklace, go to: www.emeraldnecklace.org



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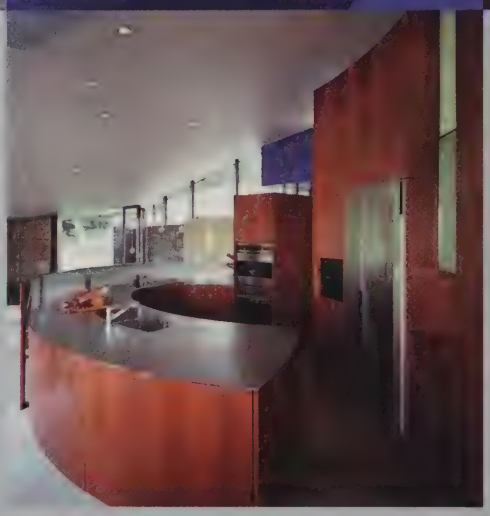
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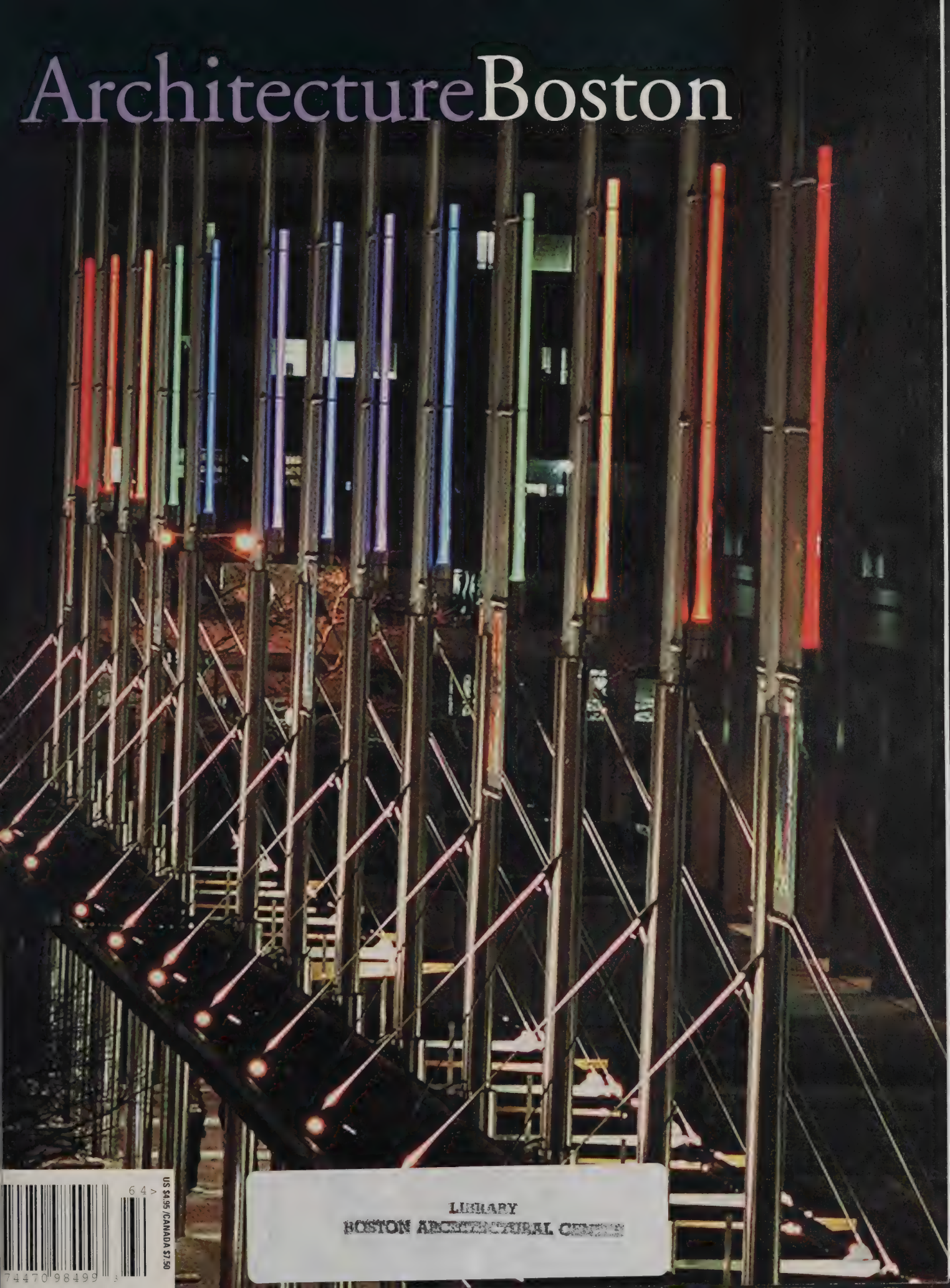
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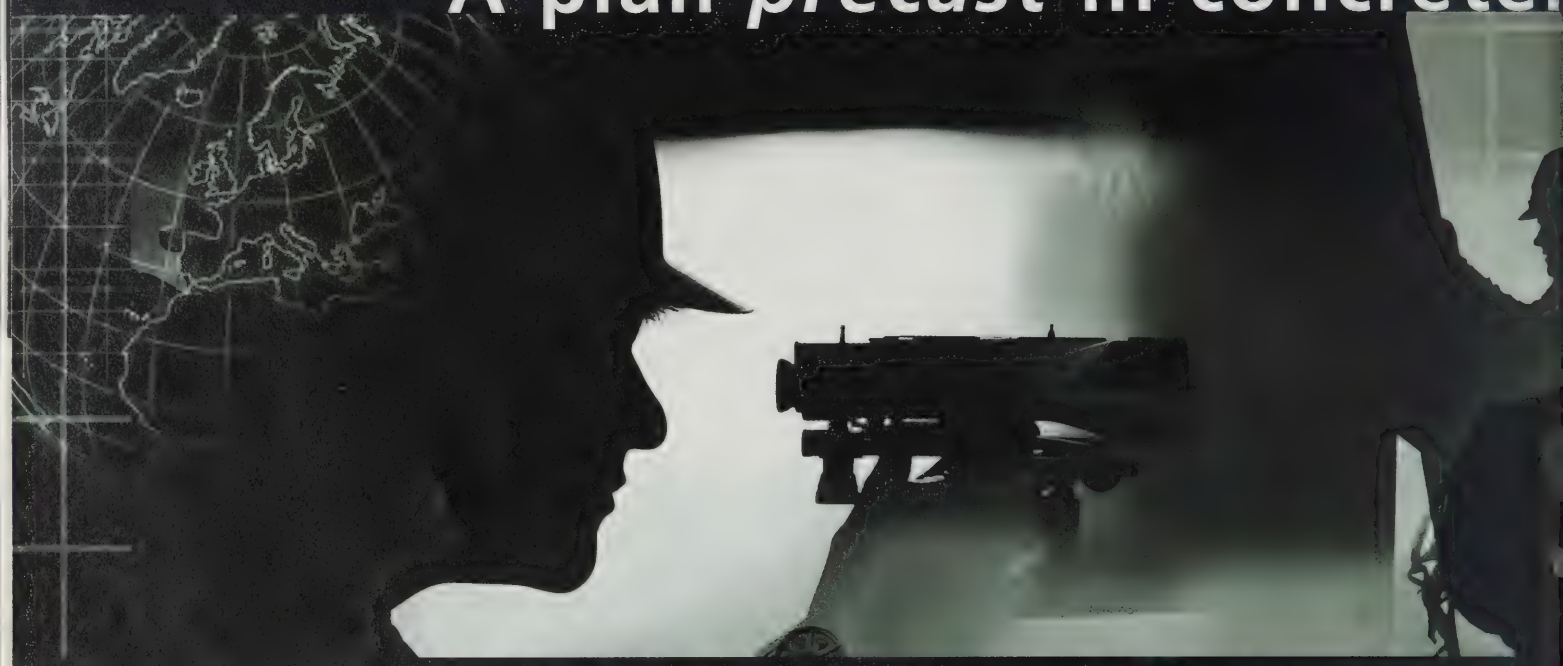
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ArchitectureBoston
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Most architects study physics at some point in their careers, usually as a prerequisite to required courses in structural engineering. Then, having found a common language with their engineer colleagues, they tend to forget the basics. But physics offers a clue not only to physical structures, but also to social structures and human behavior. Can there be a better explanation of most organizational and political behavior than inertia? Entropy is surely behind our constant struggle with clutter on our desk tops and in our lives. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which says in effect that the very act of observation alters the object being observed, goes a long way to explain political polling, the news media, and even the culture of celebrity.

And then there is Newton's Third Law of Motion: "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction" — which may well be our best explanation for a phenomenon that seems to run counter to some architects' continuing fascination with theory. Just as the profession throws itself with unbecoming desperation into the pursuit of intellectual legitimacy in the eyes of academia, we are seeing the emergence of what Gregory Beck AIA calls "experience architecture" — architecture that is influenced by entertainment. Our love of entertainment, spectacle, and theater is influencing what we build, with results that range from the sublime to the downright tawdry.

Architecture-as-entertainment has taken many forms as designers and developers alike find success in exploiting the metaphor. But before fantasies about AOL Time Warner buyouts of architectural firms gain currency, we should consider the real impulse behind the phenomenon. Each of the features in this issue of *ArchitectureBoston* explores some form of the metaphor of theater in architecture, and in each case the contributors soon begin to talk about sensory reactions — physical responses to a place that often lead to some kind of transcendent emotional response. Our love of the sensational, it turns out, may be less a love of the outrageous and more a need to find sensuous comfort, stimulation, and delight. And, as roundtable participant Lance Olson suggests, the rise of experience architecture may in fact serve as a sort of architectural Esperanto — in a polyglot, multicultural, diverse society, it allows us to find a common vocabulary and in some cases literally common ground.

The attack on the World Trade Center tragically illustrated this visceral power of architecture. Both in life and in death, so to speak, the towers elicited an extraordinary emotional response from millions of people; even street-tough New Yorkers used words like "love" and "awe" to try to describe their feelings for the buildings. But there are gentler examples, too, from Trinity Church in Boston's Copley Square to WaterFire, a multi-media public event and art installation in Providence, Rhode Island — both of which produce a sense of community, however ephemeral, through a kind of sensory awe.

We don't need to pursue our current trend of equal-but-opposite reactions. Theory and theater are not necessarily incompatible. But human nature demands certain satisfactions. Architecture that excites the mind can also be architecture that excites the senses.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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Editor
Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Managing Editor
Nancy Jenner

Editorial Assistant
Kate Kelly

Art Director
Judy Kohn

Contributing photographers
Bob Kramer
Steve Rosenthal
Peter Vanderwarker

Advertising
Richard Vendola
BSA Sales Office
1645 Falmouth Rd #1A
Centerville, MA 02632
Tel: 800-996-3863
Fax: 508-790-4750
rvendola@capecod.net

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Letters

Kudos to *ArchitectureBoston* for its issue on "growing smart" (Fall 2001). As a participant in the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England, I'd like to thank the BSA for its leadership and thoughtful approach to a very complicated set of issues.

Recently, the press featured a study by an economist at Tufts University that appears to conclude that the gap between black and white home-ownership rates is smaller in more "sprawled" urban areas. Already, this study is being used to label smart-growth advocates as elitist — concerned only with keeping development out of their exclusive suburbs. This is not the place for a critique of the study, but it is well-established that when urban areas sprawl, it is often the poor and disenfranchised who are left behind in dying cities. So while some may benefit from sprawl, there are certainly disadvantages for many — and this is before taking into consideration environmental or infrastructure costs.

The theme of "connection" highlighted in the fall issue is exactly right: We cannot separate what happens in our cities from the impacts on our suburbs and rural areas. In fact, most smart-growth principles explicitly state a need for housing for people of all income levels — a goal endorsed by the organizations such as the National Governors Association and the American Planning Association and, in a bill pending before the Massachusetts legislature, Senator Marc Pacheco's Livable Communities Act (S. 1962).

Environmentalists and affordable-housing advocates in Massachusetts worked together for successful passage of the Community Preservation Act a year ago — we can and must make common cause again. The Environmental League is talking with affordable-housing advocates to develop a common agenda that will address the affordable-housing crisis without sacrificing valuable natural resources and our quality of life. Anyone who is interested in joining this dialogue is invited to call me at 617-742-2553.

Nancy Goodman
Research Director
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Boston

The focus of the recent "Connections" issue (Fall 2001) on the subject of sprawl was very timely. Sprawl is the root cause o many of our most intractable environmen problems, from the loss of wetlands and fragmentation of wildlife habitat, to persis tent water and air pollution, to disinvest ment in cities that threatens historic buildi and the health of urban residents. Simply put, in the long run, sprawl is not environ mentally sustainable.

Massachusetts has made great advances in protecting open spaces over the past decad most notably through passage of the Community Preservation Act. But even if we protect all the open space that has beer targeted, enough buildable land remains to keep building more sprawl for decades to come.

As the participants in your roundtable discussion pointed out, the alternative to sprawl is denser development in appropria locations. David Dixon's article punctured the "Myths of Density." But we still have to ask, Why are these myths so persistent? In large measure, it is because of failures o planning and design. When we develop densely, too often we do a lousy job of it. long as increased density means larger shopping malls and office parks, wider roa and parking lots, and more cookie-cutter subdivisions, then citizens are right to resist it.

To make the case for density, we need better physical models of development. Th "new urbanist" movement has shown how architects can develop such models. And i Massachusetts, we have a built-in advanta here, the new urbanism is really the old urbanism. All around us are built example of compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly communities — from Oak Bluffs to Salem from Northampton to North Adams.

Building modern versions of those proto types will require a rethinking of conventio design and development practices. Archite have a critical role to play in this process. Architects can design street widths and cu radiuses that favor pedestrians over cars. Architects can design buildings that front on real streets with sidewalks, and not on parking lots. Architects can design project that mix housing, offices, shops, and civic buildings, all within walking distance of each other. And architects can get involve in their own communities, working to modify conventional "Euclidean" zoning codes that make it difficult or impossible to replicate the places we most admire.

e BSA's Civic Initiative has rightly
ted land development to public
estments in transportation. To
erse sprawl, state and local agencies
d to work together, channeling
wth where it is most needed: in
ntowns, town centers, "brownfield"
ustrial sites, and other redevelop-
nt sites. Architects and other
gners have important expertise that
can contribute to this kind of
ning. That is why the Massachusetts
ironmental Policy Act (MEPA)
ice has invited the BSA Civic
iative to join the citizens advisory
mittees for the redevelopment
he 1,500-acre South Weymouth
al Air Station and the MBTA's
an Ring — both of which could
e as models for transit-oriented
elopment.

our roundtable panelists observed,
wl is the result of decades of past
ctices. These cannot be reversed
night. Moving toward sustainable
erns of development in Massa-
setts will be like turning an ocean
r around — it will be a slow,
trating, ponderous process. I hope
the BSA will continue to play a
l role in those efforts.

Wickersham AIA
stant Secretary of Environmental
irs/ MEPA Director
mmonwealth of Massachusetts
ton

r issue featuring articles on
wl, smart growth, and density was
reat interest (Fall 2001). "Getting
rt About Growing Smart" was an
llent discussion and pointed out
y of the challenges of sprawl and
lternatives. Since the 1960s,
mont has been struggling to prevent
sprawl that has consumed so many
r parts of the country. Initiatives
as Act 250 (our statewide land-
law) and the Vermont Housing and
servation Board, which preserves
and forest land and provides
rdable housing, have certainly
ped to retain our characteristic land-
e of small towns that are separated
ural countryside. Nevertheless, we,
have sprawl. You can see it along
highways outside traditional urban
and village centers. You can see it in the hills where large-lot homes are fragmenting our natural resources.

Vermonters repeatedly voice their support for environmental quality, protection of the working landscape, and vital community centers. They favor housing close to shops and services, public transportation, a pedestrian environment, and small town-centers surrounded by open space. Yet, when asked where they would prefer to live — in a village or urban center within walking distance of shops and services or in the countryside where they must drive for the most basic need — the majority choose the countryside. And when it comes to making a zoning decision, local boards are often reluctant to enforce their own rules in the face of challenges by developers and neighbors. This disconnect between values and choices is a serious challenge to achieving smarter growth.

But there are some positive signs. Annual poll data show that the percentage of Vermonters interested in urban or village living has grown from 21 percent to 31 percent between 1998 and 2000. In the largest county, Chittenden County, this number is nearly 50 percent. Citizen planners are requesting material on smart-growth zoning strategies. The legislature has convened a task force to address vacant upper floors in town centers. The state environmental agency is refusing to subsidize sewer and water utilities that promote sprawl. Vermonters care about their communities and their "yearning for a sense of place" is beginning to show.

Elizabeth Humstone
Executive Director
Vermont Forum on Sprawl
Burlington, Vermont
www.vtsprawl.org

It is futile to talk about density and "sprawl" when the real issue is livability. For some, livability includes density and for others, "sprawl."

The environmentalist René Dubos once told the AIA that one human desire is to come together with other people and the other is to be able to retreat to where a stranger can be recognized. The question is not whether we have density but how we distribute it. The conventional assumption is to have it where it already exists, even if the infrastructure is overstressed.

Density is made by the desire of people to trade goods, exchange information, watch the passing scene, or just to keep warm. Density can be distributed to smaller cities where the offerings are similar but fewer — or to villages, smaller yet, where people can make their own infrastructure with homes in walking distance of stores, schools, gathering places, and public transportation, giving them more control of their own lives.

Yet city centers can also spread out along their major radial corridors, as they already do. The corridors can provide convenient access to the center by road and rail, at the same time serving higher density living along the way.

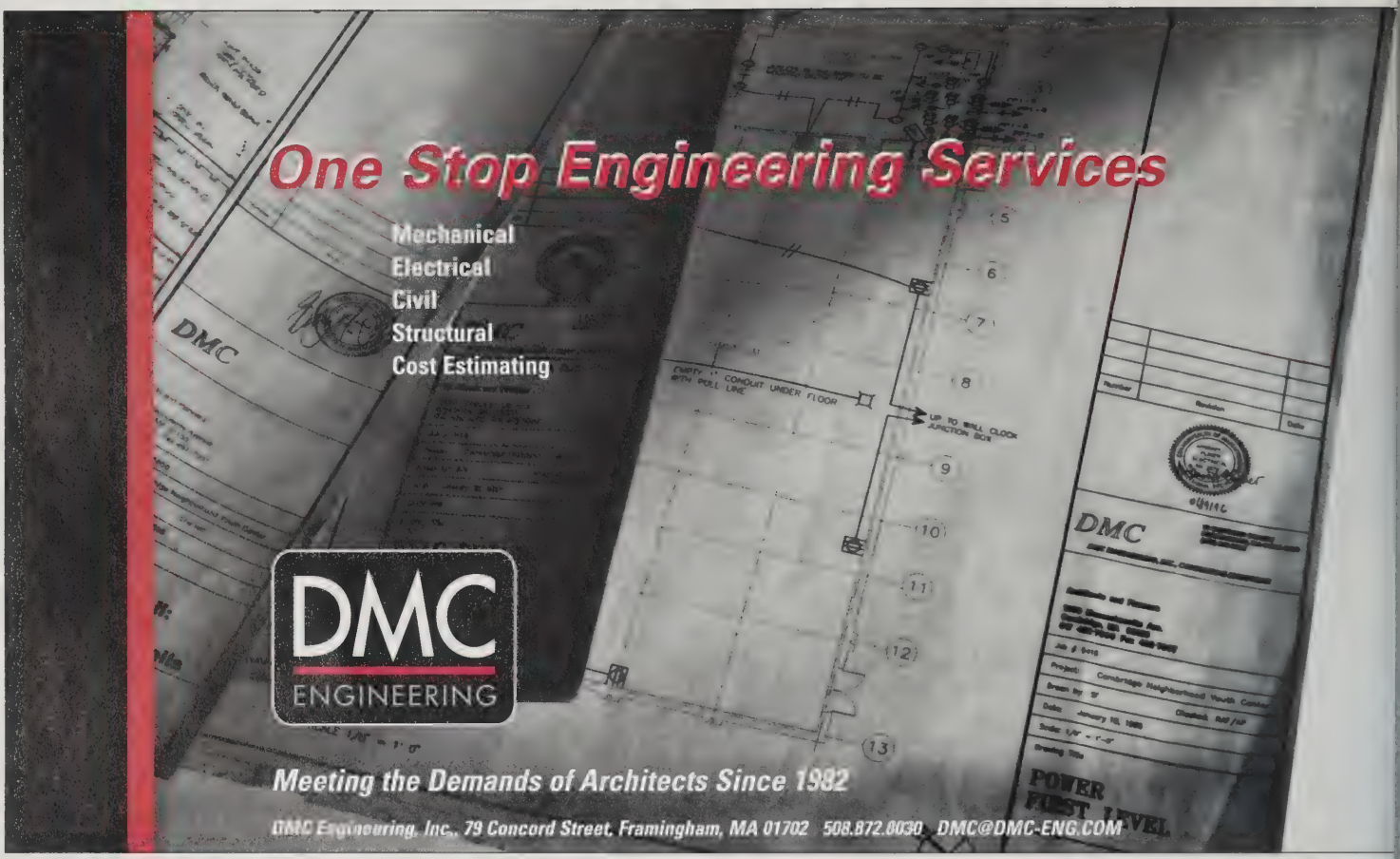
While attracting suburban growth to this higher density of service, such corridors by their nature leave the spaces between them more open and closer to public forests and small-scale farming, with networks of hiking and biking trails connected to prominent natural features, whether lakes, streams, hilltops, or seashores.

The choices can remain within this region's 50-mile radius, from the dense heart of Boston to the large private properties for those who must have them, with a variety of places along the corridor where there is the possibility of going in either direction.

Robert S. Sturgis FAIA
Chair, BSA Regional Design Committee
Weston, Massachusetts

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to: epadjen@architects.org or sent to: *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.





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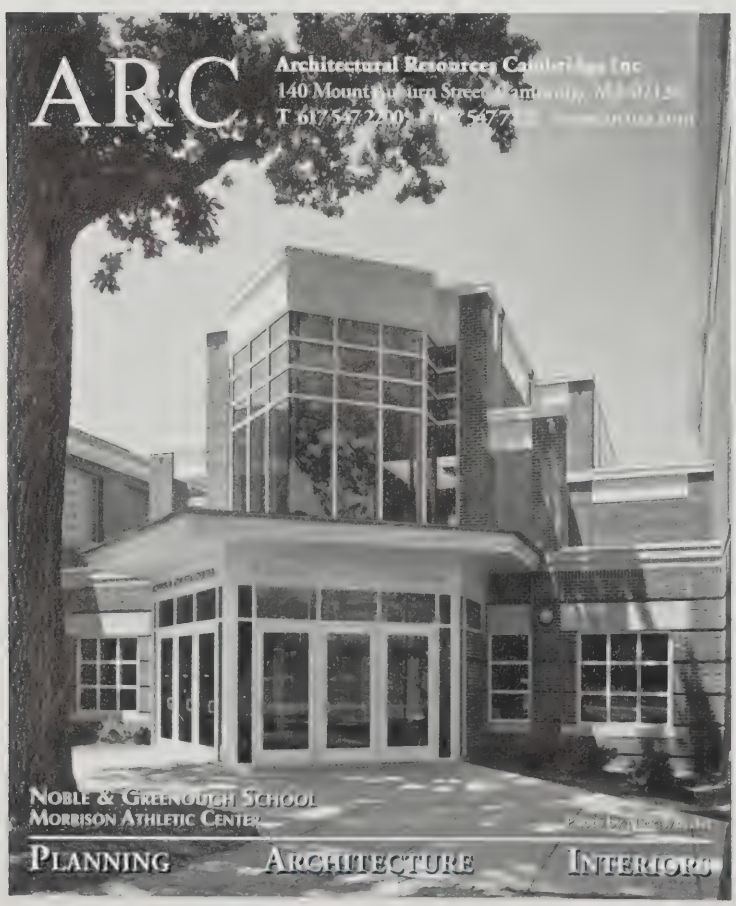
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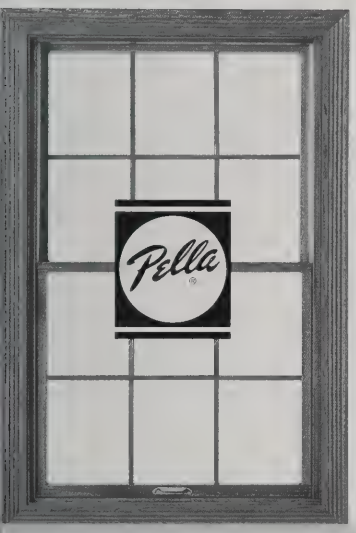
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Photographs: Warren Patterson

Winchester Country Club / Stirling/Brown Architects

Dramatic Devices: Entertainment and spectacle in architecture



Participants:

Giuliana Bruno is a professor of visual and environmental studies at Harvard University, where her work focuses on film, visual culture, and spatial theory. She is the author of *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* (Princeton University Press) and the forthcoming *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film.*

Peter Kuttner FAIA is president of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His work has included aquariums, museums, lecture halls, and theaters.

Lance Olson is the manager of the Emerson Majestic Theatre in Boston and a theater consultant.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston.*

Scott Simpson FAIA is a principal of The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Architects. TSA's work includes the Venetian in Las Vegas, the world's largest hotel and casino complex.

Scott Wilson AIA is a partner of Wilson Butler Lodge, Inc. in Boston. His firm's work includes theaters, concert halls, performing arts centers, art and music schools, and cruise ship interior design.

zabeth Padjen: We live in a culture that is luenced by a collective thirst for entertainment d spectacle, which seems to correspond with reasingly sophisticated tastes in entertainment. chitecture is now considered in terms of its ertainment value, and new building forms have lved specifically to accommodate new entertain-nt functions. In short, that thirst for entertain-nt influences both what we design and how nts and the public value the results. But I'd like start by offering you a chance to challenge that umption.

ter Kuttner: I take exception to the word phisticated." Sophisticated means there are her levels of expectation, that we expect more ers of meaning. But lately, I've been chagrined by fact that the definition of entertainment has a tain sameness to it. As I watch it permeate the lt environment, I'm somewhat saddened to see shopping mall, which is probably the American tribution to architecture in the last half century, ve into airports, hotel lobbies, train stations with ervasive sameness. There are clichés of entertain-nt that are popping up everywhere, that seem to ke those venues more similar — not distinct ds of spaces.

ott Wilson: I absolutely agree that entertainment pes architecture. For centuries, architects crafted ldings that the public accepted simply as back-und. Most of the architecture that gets attention se days is in fact spectacle in one way or another. either spectacle in its use of outrageous materials, t's spectacle in its use of outrageous forms. netimes it's daring and controversial just for the pose of being a public spectacle. Architecture is v attention-grabbing in a culture that's all about bbing attention.

nce Olson: Entertainment as a component rchitectural thought is only one example of a ader aspect in our society. The Internet is reasingly about entertainment. Increasing rnet bandwidth is being driven by the need to more entertainment through the pipeline. We seeing it in all aspects of our lives. Is this a new nomenon? I would say no. If you look at street at the turn of the last century, you see the same d of street entertainment that you see now. pping has been entertainment for years. This is part of the fun of being alive.

Giuliana Bruno: I agree with you. It's important for us to understand what we mean by spectacle today, in relation to what it was. The whole culture of modernity began at the turn of the last century around the notion of spectacle; it's not something that post-modernism invented. It really comes out of the idea of the metropolis itself — the notion of the city evolving into a metropolis and the street becoming a theater of interactions, both visual and social interactions. What has changed is that it is no longer a culture of contemplation, but a culture of distraction.

City-dwellers had so much information to absorb and were hit with so much spectacle in the street itself, that they needed to a certain extent to readjust the way in which they perceived the world. They needed to create a different mental life. But I find this to be a positive concept, not a negative concept, as long as it remains connected to a notion of creating a public sphere. We've been living with distraction for a hundred years. As we become increasingly attention-deficit-disordered, we absorb less and less information — we develop defenses against it.

Scott Wilson: But humans haven't changed. We still go window-shopping, we still look for street entertainment, we still look for shady spots to sit and rest. What's changed is that the architecture of the past was the stage-set for that life and was comfortably scaled to the person on the street. Now, too often, the bigness and excessiveness of our culture leads to architecture itself becoming the entertainment in an attempt to compete with this sensory overload. I promote returning to architecture that is scaled to be the stage-set for life's daily enjoyment.

Below and facing page:
Gateway Enhancement Project
Los Angeles World Airports (LAX)

Selbert Perkins Design Collaborative



LAX photos: Anton Grassl

Scott Simpson: I like the notion of stage-set as an appendage to entertainment — something that is set up to showcase human activity. The Venetian in Las Vegas, which is a one-and-a-half billion dollar extravaganza, is lifeless when it's empty. Those extravagant casinos, restaurants, and hotels have no purpose without people. Even in ancient times, the Forum was a stage-set for civic engagement, and Delphi was a stage-set for religious demonstration. They were buildings created around certain human behaviors, and that idea is as old as architecture. It doesn't matter if it's made of stone or Dryvit — it's all about how people interact with one another.

Lance Olson: But it's also useful to remember that a stage-set is a dynamic piece of architecture. It's built in a way that allows it to change, and to change fairly frequently.

Giuliana Bruno: Sometimes the architectural idea is the same, but it takes a different form. The movie palaces of the 1920s shared a sense of spectacle with the Greek amphitheaters and the Greek notion of a civic society coming together to share an intimate experience — where there is darkness and the experience is extremely private but at the same time public. The "atmospheric movie-palaces" of the 1920s even had ceilings that were lit like the skies — almost an open-air amphitheater.

Peter Kuttner: And yet the film theater itself was devalued after the 1920s. A packaging mentality appeared — you could build a twenty-plex of anonymous boxes; even the lobby could be anonymous. Suddenly the spectacle was only on the screen. Without the spectacle of the lobby, of intermissions, of getting refreshments, movies were merely competition for television — same thing, bigger screen. It was only in the recent economic boom that people re-visited the idea of extravagant lobbies.

Lance Olson: And through that same time period, we saw a similar evolution in institutional entertainment. Both theaters and concert halls — you could even argue museums, too — shifted from a focus on being spectacles in their own right to simply providing capacity. Today, when I hear about a new theater, I hear about the number of seats, the size of the stage — the workman-like aspects of the facility. The "dream" for the experience tends to be less important. The objective of the entertainment industry — opera, ballet, modern dance, theater — has shifted from entertainment to financial self-sufficiency. They seem to be viewed as mutually exclusive. That wasn't the case when the Keith-Albee Corporation put up the B.F. Keith Memorial Theatre in 1928, and that wasn't the case at the turn of the century when theater was part of an urban continuity that came from the streets and was based in the way people relate to one another.

Scott Simpson: There was a time when the container itself carried messages — the old movie theaters are a good example. But if you go back to the Globe theater in London in the 1600s — which was a fairly plain octagonal box — it was the engagement between the audience and the actors that gave life to that place. Later on, the plain box became ornate and the container became important in and of itself — the Opéra in Paris is a good example. You can go to the Opéra when there is no performance going on and still be entertained by the architecture. You could even say that the ultimate stage-set is Chartres, or Notre Dame, or Sainte-Chapelle, where the stained glass, the space, the quiet, the acoustics are compelling things even if there is no service going on. Those are stage-sets for religious experience. I think this "entertainment" experience, as we're calling it, permeates all architecture to some degree, and it's part of why we make buildings.

Giuliana Bruno: I agree with you entirely. I think the example of the Globe theater is particularly important, because it leads us to think about another way in which theater is an important metaphor for architecture — and that is the theater of memory. According to at least one cultural historian, the Globe was built on the model of the theaters of memory, which were a Renaissance notion that spectacularized memory itself. It's an idea that goes back to Cicero and Quintillian, suggesting that memory is architectural. Architecture could provide the structure you would need to remember a speech, for example. You would imagine a building, even a house, and fill every room, every corner, with a concept you wanted to remember. Then as you gave the speech, you would imagine a promenade through the space to recall the concepts in the order you intended. During the medieval period and the Renaissance in particular, the theater of memory became a very important way to think about language itself. As language, before photography or film, architecture was the primary outlet for memory. It was both house and theater of memory. It's an important concept that suggests that there are intricate ways of incorporating historical and personal memory in architecture, and that architecture itself can be shared and transformed through memory.

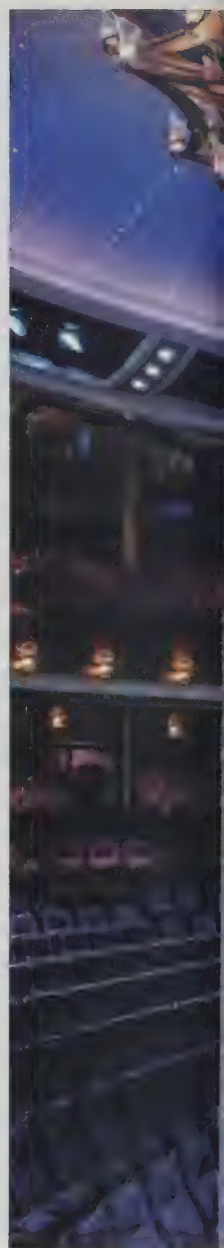




photo courtesy Wilson Butler Lodge Inc

La Scala Main Theatre, a 1,350-seat facility on the Voyager of the Seas, the world's largest cruise ship (Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines).

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izabeth Padjen: The notion of historical and rsonal memory also suggests that theater and tertainment may have an influence on the lationship of the individual to the larger mmunity. Earlier we talked about theater literally ing part of the streetscape, a shared experience. ow, with VCRs and headsets and Walkmans, tertainment seems to have focused on the dividual's experience. Does this entertainment etaphor also apply to the way we make cities? Is ere greater focus on the experience of the dividual than on shared participation in the blic realm?

Scott Simpson: I think you can make the counter-argument that an individual experience can also bring people together. We can all look at the television screen in the privacy of our own homes with no one else around and see what millions of people are seeing at the same time. It's a different kind of community, but it can reach into the most intimate realm to connect you with everyone around you, even at a distance.

Scott Wilson: I think you're both right. I think the impresarios of entertainment recognize that you can get great home theater — and better sound systems, better seating, better food and beverages — right in your own living room than you may be able to find in a community setting. And so they are trying to

compete through a seemingly unending game of one-upmanship. But they know that the experience you got in the movies 30 years ago can't hold a candle to the experience you can get through your home entertainment system today.

Peter Kuttner: It's true that entertainment itself was once part of the public domain to a far greater extent than it is today. But there is another aspect of that experience that is worth looking at, which is the individual's relationship to the spectacle itself and the individual's control of it. Entertainment frequently demands that you surrender some control to the narrative you are being presented with. It's a debate we frequently have with clients, particularly in museums and exhibition design. It's a lot like film. In an aquarium, for example, we lead the visitors through a narrative as they proceed through the building. We explain some basics, we show them something amazing, we explore a little more, and then we show them something even more amazing. It's very different from, say, a children's museum, where we in effect drop you at the door and you run off and explore. But the experiences that people remember, that are most successful, are often the ones that have a film structure to them, where we very carefully craft the experience.

Scott Wilson: It's choreography.

Peter Kuttner: Right. It's a relationship between us as the designers and the individual; it's not a group experience like Carnival, for example, with people partying in the streets. But it's very successful, and that's one of the things that's made this trend toward entertainment such a monolithic force — simply that it *is* so successful. At the same time, a lot of music, film, even architecture, takes too much control away from the audience and leaves them to experience it passively. It's a dangerous side of all this that is highly narcotic.

Scott Wilson: But there's nothing new about that. We were talking earlier about the "atmospheric theaters" that John Eberson designed. I always say that Eberson did Disney before Disney did Disney. John Eberson very carefully choreographed you through a small space, took you through the castle gates, took you to the inner chamber, and then led you through some portal into the village square, into the theater. If you try to move through the building in any other way, it doesn't work nearly as well as if you experience it exactly the way he intended. Then Disney followed suit, and before long, we were all doing it. In our own practice, in theater design, we very carefully choreograph the theater-goers. We choreograph how they pass under the marquee and their first views of the gift shop, the café, and the box office. We decompress them as they go through intimate passages into the grand stairways and grand halls, and then we ensure that they enter the auditorium in just the right places, so they go through the doors and go, Wow! But this doesn't apply only to theaters — I think many architects today are choreographing their work.



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cott Simpson: You mentioned Disney who, in y mind, is one of the great architectural geniuses f the 20th century. He blended architecture with l kind of different experiences — TV shows, ythology and fairy-tales, music, shopping, and f course the villages: Adventureland, Tomorrow- nd, Frontierland. He choreographed the entire xperience — the procession, the colors, the smells, e sounds. And he actually created a mythology for whole generation of children. He showed that ou can blend the corporate and commercial world ith the entertainment world. And ultimately he ad an enormous influence on us as consumers of uilt space.

ance Olson: I think there's a common thread in l these comments — that there is a way for eople to engage themselves in their environment, ake their own set of choices, and yet remain on e choreographed path, so that people are both tive and passive at the same time. They can reach e same outcome, but approach it in different ays. I think this is a terribly important thing. It's nalogous to sitting in your living room, deciding hen you're going to start the popcorn, when you're oing to start the movie, and when you're going hit the pause button. You have a certain degree of ntrol and yet the outcome is the same.

iuliana Bruno: We keep returning to cinema as nother metaphor, because film is precisely that nd of visual experience that moves frame by ame, shot by shot, with an itinerary that has been t up for you. You as a spectator can participate in , but you cannot stop it. And yet there is some- ing about film that allows you to wander in the ame, in an emotional or psychic experience. Film ecame an integral part of the language of the 20th ntury because that's how we now perceive and rocess life — through images.

l suggest that it's not by chance that the museum nerged as an institution around the same time the metropolis and the cinema emerged — they ew out of late 19th-century culture. I've often ought that the museum was really the first movie, the way people observed exhibitions, sometimes en dioramas, that were themselves a precursor of lm space. The image was lit from the inside and e outside was dark, and you passed from one place the next in an itinerary, which is to a certain tent the language of film. So film found itself at e intersection of the relationship between the etropolis and the museum. And to my mind film self has now become a museum, in the sense that it is now the repository of our memory, or the place where the theater of memory resides. That is how we process things.

Almost everyone watched the horror of September 11 on television, but I had friends in New York who watched it live. And some of them felt that at a certain level, watching it on television was more real than looking out their windows. It's disturbing, yet on the other hand, it really says something about the way in which even private experience has become a collective experience — those images connected people not only across the city but also across the world. The events of that day had never happened before, but somehow, through cheap horror movies, they *had* happened. And that provided a way of processing it all. People have told me that the experience of walking across the bridges or running up the street was something they could only conceptualize by thinking, "I've been here, in this particular spot, in a movie theater."

Scott Simpson: But I do think that the museum and the cinema have different roots. The original proposition of the cinema was: "Come inside, we're going to fool you for a while, we're a place of imagination." The original proposition of the museum was different — a place of recall, of memory, of the past. What we're seeing now is the merging of the two propositions, a kind of collaboration, where this thing we call entertainment becomes the common entry point.

Giuliana Bruno: I disagree — film was originally about the documentation of everyday life. When I show my students the 1895 film *The Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station* — which is nothing but a train running across the screen — they are not moved, and do not move. They don't have the same reaction to it that people had at the time, running away from the movie theater, thinking they were about to be crushed by the train. So the boundary between the imaginary and the real has shifted in relation to the way in which the language of moving images has shifted. But there was a tremendous interest at the turn of the century, when film was invented, in the spectacle of the real. And that is an important idea — that spectacle is not just imaginary. There is a spectacle of the real. And it permeates many aspects of modern culture, including the museum. Remember also that film emerged at a time in Paris when people went on Sunday to the morgue to look at the cadavers. It's not very different from the cadavers we see on the screen.

Elizabeth Padjen: I wonder if film hasn't trained our minds to see things, or to want to see things, in a linear way. Perhaps the experience of watching the September 11 events was made even more overwhelming because it was so multi-dimensional and so uncertain. Everything seemed to happen at once, and no one knew what would be next. Watching it all on television might have been a way of trying to control it, to try to capture the story in a more familiar form, which is a linear narrative. And I wonder if linear narrative isn't also a fundamental architectural experience, and that the architectural spectacles that we are seeing today are trying to break out of that linearity.

Giuliana Bruno: I don't think that film is a linear experience. I actually think that because it's 24 frames per second, the amount of information that moves you and assaults you makes a language of shock. One of the ways in which film relates to the traits of the museum is that you have a vitrine — a framed "window" in effect, which has sides that are not always seen, so you always expect something to come from top, left, bottom and right, behind and front. There's an off-screen space that infringes on the frame that is just as strong as the space within the frame. Hollywood has established a form of control, so that we experience it as a linear narrative, but narrative itself doesn't necessarily have to be linear. This applies as well to the narrative of an architectural itinerary.

Peter Kuttner: I think that there is a kind of *auteur* position that we all take. As we're telling a story, or teaching somebody, or entertaining, or sharing something that we feel passionate about, we all approach it differently. Take the Holocaust, for example. If you watch Spielberg's film, if you go to the Holocaust Museum, if you read any number of history books, if you talk to a survivor, if you go to Berlin and see Libeskind's museum, you will understand different aspects of the events. Other than having witnessed it all firsthand, you can never fully experience it. We've been talking about entertainment, but really we're talking about different media for providing information, for providing content. Architecture can do it in one way, film another way, and music and plays in still other ways. I don't think that the creators of any of this are obsessively trying to control the experience. They're just trying to give it enough order to provide some commonality, so you will come to love something — or appreciate it or be fearful of it — as they do, because of the way you were told the story. The best entertainment, however you define it, has content. The only threat I see is pandering to a public that you underestimate, where the audience appears to be all 14-year-old boys.

Lance Olson: The live performing arts seem to be moving in a way that is driven by the American experience more than in years past. We have become a complex culture, with people with different languages and even different ways of using the same language, substantial regional differences, and immigrants who continue to change the way we look at things. The performing arts are responding to this by moving away from a verbal base and moving toward a shared emotional vocabulary. And so we see a lot more opera as an important form of expression, and more dance. To a certain degree, theater itself is evolving from a verbally based form — the Oscar Wilde kind of verbal manipulation — to something that incorporates movement and emotional content. Architecture is also one of those non-verbal participatory processes. And I think this mirrors what you see in shopping center architecture and certainly in a Disney environment, where color, shape, sensation, and sound tell you where you are.

Scott Simpson: That trend could also explain the growth of the sports industry, if you think about sports as entertainment — the outcome is uncertain, there is a certain choreography, and there's the drama of somebody winning and somebody losing. Athletes are also now paid as entertainers — that's the only way to justify those high salaries.

Peter Kuttner: Sports are also an interesting example of entertainment that is supplemented by architecture that is deliberately theatrical. The recent trend toward nostalgic baseball stadiums has had a tremendous impact on attendance.

Elizabeth Padjen: We're seeing it in the cruise ship industry, too, where theatrical design heightens the entertainment experience itself.

Scott Wilson: In another twist on our theme, the biggest boost to the cruise industry was the movie *Titanic*, with its focus on the rich experience of the environment — the parlors and the grand stairs. That coincided with Disney's entry in the market, starting with the Big Red Boat, which was a refit, and then the launching of the Magic in 1998. Disney's involvement had the same effect as when Marcus Loew, the theater magnate, selected John Eberson to expand his cinema holdings in the1920s — suddenly the Keiths, the Warner brothers and theater architects Thomas Lamb and C.W. and George Rapp had to keep up with the new innova-

ions of their competition. In the cruise industry, he two or three naval architects from Norway and Sweden who had designed most of the cruise ships uddenly had competitors. Because Disney hired designers like David Rockwell, soon other American rchitects started to bring their experience to the ndustry.

Elizabeth Padjen: Thereby creating a whole new uilding type.

Scott Wilson: That's right. There was no cruise ndustry before 1971 to speak of. The ocean liners rossing the Atlantic, primarily for transportation, were in decline until a couple people thought, "Hey, et's take these boats, turn them into floating hotels, nd cruise around the Caribbean on tours."

Giuliana Bruno: That speaks to another aspect f this notion of spectacle and architecture, which is ourism and the idea of being transported some-where else. As in film, where it happens through the magination, cruise ships and traveling to destina-ions like the Venetian in Las Vegas literally ransport you to a place which then emotionally ransports you to yet another place.

Scott Simpson: The developer of the Venetian, heldon Anderson, actually got his start in cruise hips. He owned a convention center in Vegas, and ealized, "If I've got the hotel, the convention trade, he restaurants, and the casino, I've got a money-achine." It's like having a captive audience on cruise ship, and the Venetian is basically a huge ruise ship on land.

cott Wilson: How many rooms?

cott Simpson: There were 3,000 at first, another ,000 on-line right now, and another 3,000 rojected to start next year. A total of 7,000 rooms n one building. All of them suites.

cott Wilson: That's four of our cruise ships.

cott Simpson: We did study after study. It was heldon's wife, Miriam, who said, "I've always liked enice. Let's do Venice." And Sheldon said, "Hey, hat's a great idea." And that's how it became the enetian.

lizabeth Padjen: The Venetian may have edefined the meaning of "spectacle," taking it up a ew notches. And yet scale — bigness — isn't an bsolute ingredient of spectacle. It's possible to think f spectacle occurring on a small scale. Fallingwater ight be a good example of spectacle at an intimate cale. Perhaps we tend to think that spectacle must



photo: Cormier/Malinowski/INSITE

The Venetian Resort Hotel Las Vegas, Nevada

Architect:
TSA of Nevada, an affiliate of The Stubbins Associates, and WATG of Nevada

be ever more over-the-top in terms of scale or shock value because the power to inspire awe decreases with our exposure to it.

Lance Olson: I've spent hours lying on my back on the benches near the fountain of the World Trade Center. On very windy days, the ropes on the flagpoles would make very, very loud noises, enough to drive the pigeons away and drive the children around to the other side of the plaza. I would look up at the towers and spend many hours trying to decide whether they were swaying in the wind or whether it was just me. I'd hear the people walking behind me, I'd hear the photographers, and I'd



photo courtesy Mitsubishi Estate Company, Ltd.

The Landmark Tower in Yokohama, Japan, as seen from the city center.

The Stubbins Associates wi Mitsubishi Estate Company

hear many different voices from all over the world. The sounds of the water — it was very special. Sometimes I would get up and lie on another bench to change perspective. It was all in a circle and all the same, yet the towers changed completely when I moved 20 feet around the circumference. I could come back in the evening and make up wonderful stories — beautiful stories — about why this light was on or that light went off. And I'd think about the cleaners and the workers, and wonder why the sun was setting right at that particular point between the two towers. This was theater, one of the most extraordinary pieces of theater in New York, which is a theater town. It may have been architecture as well.

Elizabeth Padjen: As you were painting that picture, Lance, you were talking about the environment and sensory perceptions. But you weren't really talking about the building themselves. What made that experience theater?

Lance Olson: It was participatory, it was structured, it had a certain linear character to it — a beginning, a middle, and an end. It had other people involved at the same time and in the same space. I will admit that I'm stretching the definition of theater here.

Elizabeth Padjen: You said it so intuitively and so quickly that I think you probably aren't stretching.

Giuliana Bruno: I agree with you. There is theater in sensory perceptions, but that's also about architecture.

Scott Wilson: Lance could have in the same way described the experience of lying on a mountaintop surrounded by trees — with one exception. He could hear the photographers, he was aware of the presence of other human activity. A client recently said to me that the theater space must mesh the performers and the theater-goers into one. When Lance was lying on the bench, even though he wasn't one of the 50,000 people entering the towers, he was able to experience the lives of the janitors and the workers and the tourists through his imagination and piece it all together into a snapshot of life at that point of time in that place. And that is what I think theater is. A stage-set in the theater has been crafted for a particular scene that repeats itself night after night. And architecture can play the same role. In our buildings, we have different actors coming to different shows in different years. But they're still coming for the same experience. ■■■

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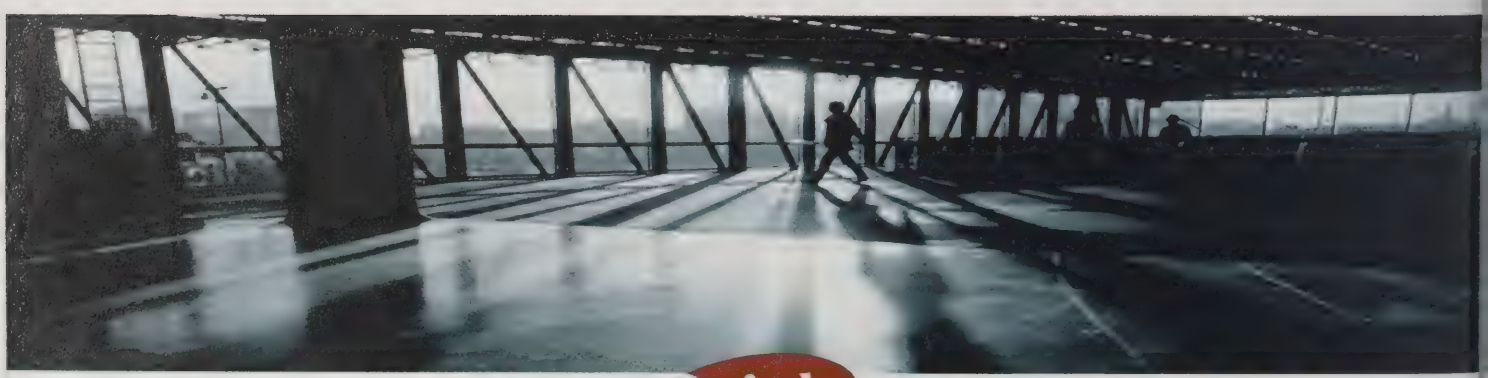
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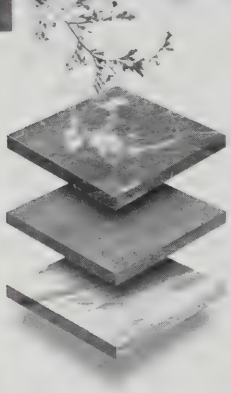
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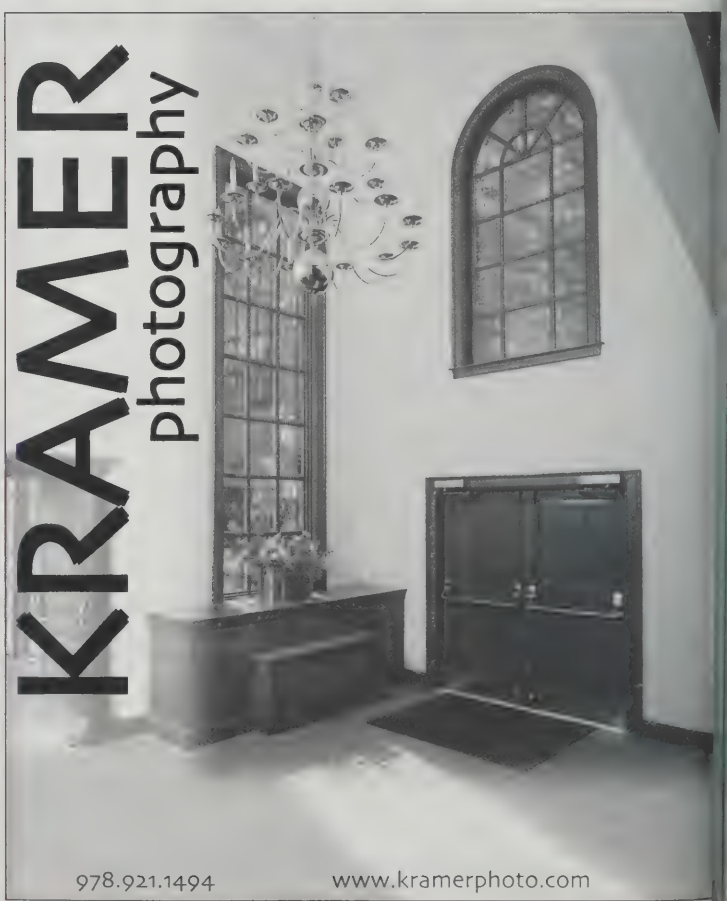
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Background:
Plan of Fort Donelson and its outworks

Fort Donelson National Battlefield, Tennessee

Inset:
Fort Donelson log hut, one of approximately 100 shelters originally built as Confederate winter quarters.

Plan of Fort Donelson and its outworks from Atlas to Accompany the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*

Theater of War

by Sharon Matthews AIA

If you sail along the coast of New England, you will notice bits and pieces of concrete towers that poke out among the tree lines. They are easy to see around Portland, Portsmouth, and Boston. These towers, and the gun emplacements they supported, are part of our architectural legacy of the theater of war in the Atlantic. Some are privately owned and treated like souvenirs, some have been converted to homes, and some just wait for the weather. They are here because there was a very real threat of attack from enemy submarines off the coast during World War II: cargo ships were sunk; spies were put ashore. I have visited many of these towers and find them oddly reassuring.

Someone recently brought me a copy of the *Hartford Courant* with an article about a newly renovated fort in Connecticut. It is described in the newspaper as the centerpiece of a park — it has expansive views, it is "a window to the past." Exhibits explain how it has been used, and it will soon have a gift shop. Visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic. The reporter outlines a short version of a Revolutionary War battle fought at this site and describes the current fort as having "an imposing presence." I know that as soon as the gift shop is open, even though I am a "fort fan," I will have mixed feelings about going there. The description reminds me of a string of sites I have visited along the eastern coast of the United States that are promoted as "attractions" by their state tourist-information centers.

An 18th-century European fortification overlooks the Richelieu River east of Montreal. Visitors can try on costumes (uniforms); sets (exhibits) illustrate the past complete with mannequins; and young employees of the park dressed in the clothes of the era perform the roles of early inhabitants. The site is entertaining, but at the same time it feels like an imperfectly built and not very well organized Disney experience. It is a stark contrast to the first fort I can remember visiting — the Alamo. In the 1950s, the Alamo was brown and dusty. I remember paths worn in the dirt and random piles of fallen stone. There was a panorama, but it was old and tattered, and neither the sound nor the lights that were supposed to blink worked. My brother and I played there with wooden guns, taking turns being Texans and Mexicans. It was my favorite place.

These three place memories, 10 years of designing theatrical sets, and a summer spent searching for a textbook for a survey course on the history of 20th-century architecture have all contributed to ill-formed questions teasing my mind about connections between theater and the architecture of war. Why do I much prefer the sites that are not "improved"? Why am I not transported to the past by teenagers acting as soldiers? Why do I dislike the gift shops but still buy another baseball hat because this one says "Ft. Jackson," which is the southernmost fort on the Mississippi? What did it feel like to be stationed in those towers watching for submarines? What was important about the secrecy once attached to the technology of fort construction? Why do all the books on the architecture of the 20th century ignore submarine pens, offshore fortifications, bomb shelters, and flak towers? What does any of this have to do with architectural practice today? Is architecture as entertainment "real"? Do buildings illustrate the stories or are they themselves the stories?

On September 11, the destruction at the Pentagon and of the World Trade Center was a stunning example of buildings in starring roles. The combination of their shapes and their use made them dramatically appropriate for the message the terrorists wanted to send. This is not a new idea. An earlier example of the interrelatedness of theater and the symbolic power of architecture occurred in 1916 in Ireland. As some historians suggest in accounts of the Easter Rebellion, rebels occupied the General Post Office building because it represented, in both its use and its architectural style, the hated enemy. Sometimes the targets of attacks are part of the war of morale. The audience need to see, and therefore to understand, the power of the aggressor. Theater, art, life, death, and architecture were, and are, seamless.

In my continuing exploration of the connections between military architecture and theater, I recently visited two sites in Boston Harbor: Fort Warren on Georges Island and Fort Andrews on Peddock's Island. Fort Warren is primarily a pre-Civil War construction of granite and brick. Less obviously,

Sharon Matthews AIA is executive director of the National Architectural Accrediting Board in Washington, DC. She was previously head of the architecture department at Wentworth Institute of Technology and served on the BSA board as director of education and research.

The author wishes to thank Bill Stokinger and Alex Hall of the Metropolitan District Commission for generously sharing information about Fort Andrews and Fort Warren, and Dan O'Connell, research librarian at the Wentworth Institute of Technology, for background on the Easter Rebellion.

Three detail views of
Fort Mississippi

Gulf Islands National Seashore
Gulfport, Mississippi







there are remains of additions and renovations related to almost every US war since then: a WWII tower for tracking ship movements; fire-control towers that supported gun emplacements; the iron-barred windows of rooms used to plot the locations of mines laid in the harbor. Fort Warren is a popular place to come on a hot summer day for picnics and for touring. It is a multi-layered site, intertwining many decades of architectural history. Its complexity of both narrative and architectural fabric keeps it alive.

Fort Andrews, by contrast, offers a fairly simple architectural story. It was built in the early 20th century and is organized as a village without even a fence, never mind a bastion or demi-lune. There has been very little investment in preservation and the buildings, mostly of brick and wood and slate, are now rapidly deteriorating. As you walk along the road behind the officers' houses, the ghosts of the families who lived there seem to hover behind windows and doors. It feels very real. The place and the buildings, though, appear discarded, not valued, and without much potential as a setting for entertainment or picnics. Resembling a neighborhood center planned around a limited idea of community, the site lacks the potential for dramatic conflict — either between people at war or as an architectural composition.

Fort Warren and Fort Andrews, built before and after the Civil War respectively, are two very different representations of military architecture: one shaped as a response to weapons of attack and the other reflecting a pattern of social structure. It's easy to mentally reconstruct a drama of fear and determination at Fort Warren, and yet, paradoxically, its multifaceted complexity is reassuring. The social order expressed at Fort Andrews, on the other hand, is simple but also simplistic; its one-dimensional thinking, similar to so many "new urban" and gated communities today, only appears to offer security and safety. In thinking about the power of theater to engage our emotions and the dynamic tensions that often occur in the architecture of war, we might better learn how to reconnect our design decisions with the passion and narrative of our culture. ■■■



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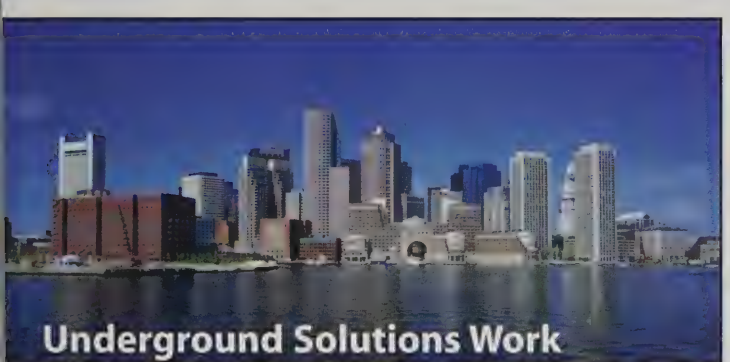
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City Stages

The Faneuil Hall Marketplace

by James McCown







rubric of "festival marketplace," and you've got a concept that helped bring a sense of theatricality back into city life — at a time when "urban" had become synonymous with everything bad.

Faneuil Hall Marketplace — also known as Quincy Market — celebrated its 25th anniversary this past summer, having become in some ways a victim of its own success. Unforgiving real estate economics priced out the small one-of-a-kind shops that had drawn both locals and tourists, and replaced them with chain stores, making the shopping experience more homogenized. By the late 1980s, many design pundits seized on the idea that Faneuil and other festival marketplaces — which by then had cropped up everywhere — were "inauthentic" or, in the most worn cliché in architectural criticism, "Disneyfied."

Dennis Frenchman, professor of urban design at MIT, dismisses these design polemics: "Faneuil Hall Marketplace is every bit as authentic an example of our time as its past use [as a food market] was of its time. Tourism is one of our biggest industries. There is a genuine need to accommodate these people. How is that less authentic?" He adds that the marketplace also provided an important lesson to the patrons of architecture: "It showed the real estate people that there is great value in something other than tall buildings."

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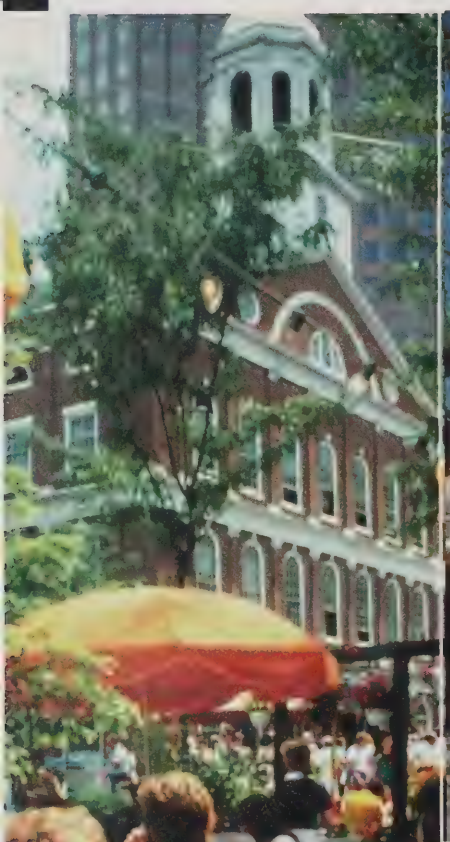






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It also changed the way we look at cities, offering suburbanites an urban experience that was safe and unthreatening and, most of all, fun. People found not just the see-and-be-seen opportunities they lacked back in Framingham, but also stores that catered to a nascent sense of adventure and sophistication — otherwise, why bother coming into town at all?













Interactive model, photos courtesy Thompson Design Group

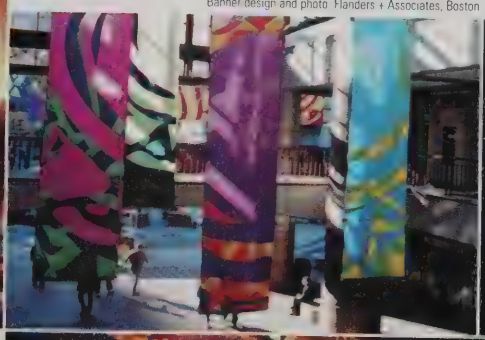
But the ubiquitous chain stores that replaced the original local tenants are not immune to market brutality — the Warner Brothers emporium has closed, and the Disney store is slated for closure by year-end. As the project's owner, the Rouse Company, continues with an $18-million renovation, there are calls for more stringent enforcement of the architectural oversight that is part of the company's 99-year lease on the property.

"My plea is that the city pay more attention with design review of any changes," says Jane Thompson AICP, whose husband Ben Thompson FAIA was the marketplace's original visionary. "And a mix of more local tenants should be part of the deal."

Even as the theme stores close and yet another ersatz "Cheers" bar opens, Faneuil Hall Marketplace endures, a gift to the city from the otherwise aesthetically challenged 1970s. Disney yes, Disney no, "urban themepark" or authentic urbanism, it remains a place where city dweller, suburbanite and tourist alike can do the same impromptu shtick: Stand on the plaza between the Charles Bulfinch and Alexander Parris buildings. Smell a briny wind coming in off the harbor. Watch people, and let them watch you. Showtime. ■■■

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.





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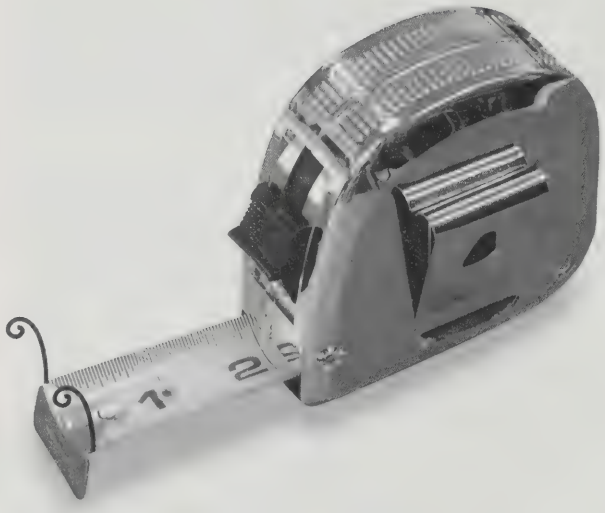
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Ritual, Theater, and the City

by A. Vernon Woodworth AIA



Theater has always been a part of urban life, both in the narrow sense of rehearsed presentations and in the wider sense, in which everyone is simultaneously performer and audience in the spontaneous drama of everyday life. Urban life is currently undergoing a reappraisal that is having a profound effect on the redevelopment of urban neighborhoods. Planners and designers now promote 24-hour communities, open space, affordable housing, and public transportation as essential ingredients of a healthy urban environment. Missing from this list are live theater, public ritual, and a renewed appreciation of the significance of dramatic space — all key factors in the vitality of city life.

In a theatrical performance, two things happen when the lights go down and the curtain goes up: Onstage, a drama unfolds that speaks somehow to the human condition and to universal emotions, conflicts, and aspirations. Offstage, in the darkened rows of seats, a cross-section of the local population, mostly strangers to one another, joins together in experiencing this drama. These simultaneous events define the dramatic experience.

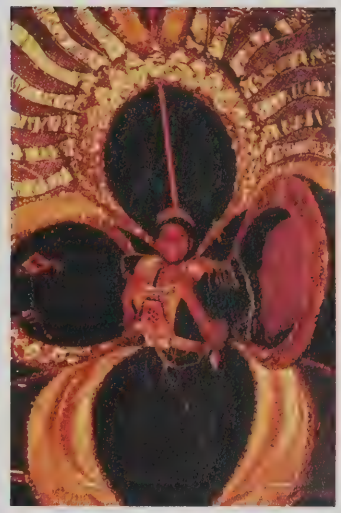
The physical space of the theater is the context for this experience. The design of any space originates with the architect's conception of what will take place there — not just a spatial or functional conception, but an experiential conception as well. If theater is understood as entertainment, then the quality of the sound system and the comfort of the seating become preeminent. If theater is understood as an outlet for the imagination and as cultural expression, then the formal aspects of the space may take on a symbolic dimension, conveying artistic or cultural values. If, however, theater is understood as catharsis, which is how Aristotle described the intent of tragic drama, then architecture becomes a context in which revelation and transformation can take place. This understanding of dramatic space comes closest to drama's earliest conception as a release of emotional energy providing renewal for the community.

How do we understand live theater today, in an age of cinema megaplexes, arena rock, and surround-sound DVD entertainment centers? What is the role of live theater in the life of a city, when the signing of a professional athlete can command more newspaper space than one repertory company's entire season? Do we still wish to tap the emotional wellspring of dramatic transformation in modern theater and to give it architectural expression, or is this an obsolete idea in the digital age? And if we seek to affirm theater's vital role in urban life, what conceptual tools, metaphors, and architectural models can we employ?

Let's start with the experience itself. Live theater heightens our sense of human connection. Movies take us somewhere else, but theater brings us fully into the moment. The atmosphere between the actors and the audience crackles with the electricity of that moment. The actions of the individuals onstage are experienced in the larger context of fate, destiny, and our relationship to the cosmos, precisely because of the energy that is created between the actors and the audience. Dramatic awareness is a state of mind, a conviction that all life is a stage, and that the play's the thing. After a good performance, we carry this state of mind out into the streets of the city, temporarily transformed by our experience. The play has given us a connection to our common human condition, and a context in which to experience and make meaning of that condition. Although ancient Greek drama was closely tied to the religious world-view of the time, modern live theater has generally had the advantage over organized religion of being accessible to all. Theater is therefore an inclusive institution that promotes a unique form of temporary community in harmony with the diversity of urban life.

The anthropologist Victor Turner identifies the cultural need for "liminal" (threshold) experiences such as those found in rituals, carnivals, and dramas. Turner points out that human society relies upon structure roles and behavior as an essential condition of survival. However, hierarchical structure creates friction and tensions that can build and eventually become counterproductive. Ritual experiences — such as dramatic







presentations, sports playoffs, even the Boston Pops concert on the Fourth of July — release the observers from their structured condition and allow the release of a form of energy that Turner calls "communitas," a term that carries the implication of both community and communion. The release of communitas energy is the goal of the ritual process, and is considered to be a healing force in many cultural contexts. Turner's work identifies this emotional energy as one of the most powerful forces in human culture.

Our most profound architecture understands, enhances, and communicates the significance of human activity. We are moved by architecture that connects us with some larger meaning. Gothic churches are much more than well-designed assembly halls: Beyond the sight-lines, acoustics, and durable construction, the sense of communion and participation in the mystery of divinity gives these buildings their power to inspire. Good architecture understands the source of this power. If we do not understand where the power comes from, the space cannot resonate; it can only contain.

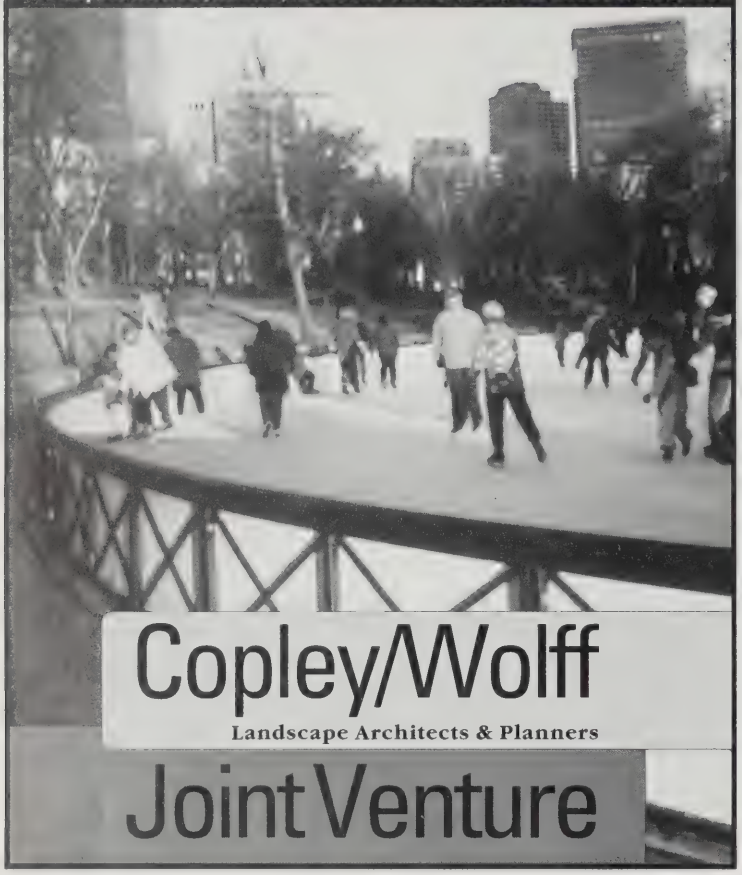
Victor Turner's work on ritual encompassed several decades spent with African tribes in an attempt to understand how these societies cope with social friction and transition. Yet his observations clearly apply to our society as well. We call on communitas energy when social healing is needed, as in the candlelight vigils and memorial services following the events of September 11. But if communitas is such a powerful force, where is its expression and cultivation in our architecture and urban spaces? The greatest strength of Turner's work is his convincing observation that the release of communitas energy lies at the core of every human ritual. Whether the event be joyous (a wedding) or sad (a funeral), the purpose of a ritual is to bring the feeling out in a group context where all can experience it, release it, and move beyond it. Turner also observes that this release of energy not only serves to bind the community, but also endows the participants with a renewed sense of connection to and harmony with the cosmos.

When we look for it, we find communitas energy in many urban events. The North End festivals, First Night, Mardi Gras, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Bastille Day, the Palio in Siena, and the Running of the Bulls are among the most well-known examples. City-builders have always recognized the social importance of these festivities and have provided urban spaces to contain them. Modern planners struggle with this aspect of city life when the traditions and festivals are not available to enliven their new urban squares and vest-pocket parks. But city life is itself a pageant that demands to be celebrated, for it is the stage on which the human drama unfolds. Palladio recognized this in his design for the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, in which an urban streetscape forms the backdrop to the stage.

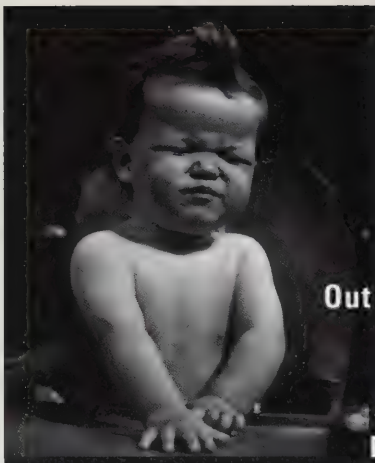
We are drawn together in theater by the common contents of the human heart. Live theater is, along with certain types of musical events, perhaps our most intimate form of association in the city. While the city is the stage for the human drama, the theater is the context in which we come to emotional grips with this drama. However we may understand the role of the theater in the city, it is an essential one, which expresses and reinforces our sense of connection to each other, to the world around us, and to ourselves. ■■■

A. Vernon Woodworth AIA is chair of the BSA Codes Committee and a member of the Sullivan Code Group in Boston. He is a graduate of the C.G. Jung Institute-Boston and holds a Masters degree in theological studies from the Harvard Divinity School

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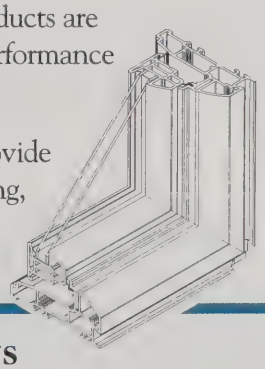
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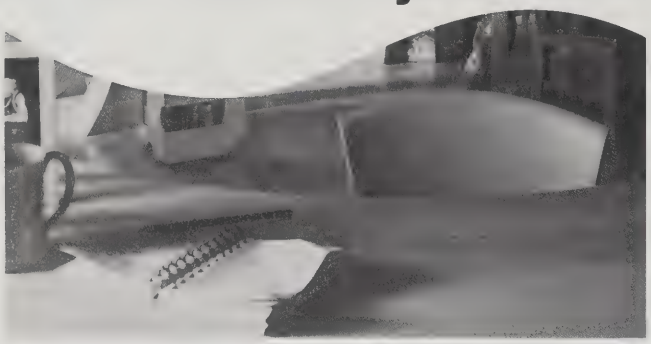
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Theater of the Night

Dietrich Neumann talks with Jeffrey Stein AIA



Dietrich Neumann is a professor of architectural history at Brown University. He was editor and coauthor of *Film Architecture: Set Design from Metropolis to Blade Runner* (Prestel, 1996), which accompanied a traveling exhibition of the same name, and has frequently published essays on European and American architecture of the early 20th century. He was chief curator of a traveling exhibition about Richard Neutra's Windshield House on Fishers Island, which opened at Harvard University's Sackler Museum on November 10, 2001, and edited the accompanying catalogue (Yale University Press, 2001). He is also the author of the forthcoming *Architecture of the Night* (Prestel, 2002), which will accompany an exhibition about the history of architectural illumination.



photo: Patrice Fleisch

Jeffrey Stein AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker + Tradesman* and professor of architecture at Wentworth Institute of Technology. He recently served as commissioner of education for the BSA. He started his architecture career as a stage designer and theater lighting consultant.

Stein: You seem to have carved out a field of inquiry at the intersection of architecture, theater, and film that has brought you most recently to study the architecture of the night — specifically, how and why we illuminate buildings. Humans, it turns out, are phototropic; we really *are* attracted to light. What drew you to this issue?

Neumann: Natural light has of course influenced architecture from its beginning, but artificial light is a relatively recent discovery. There were some predecessors, but it was mainly in the 20th century that architects began to use artificial light. Much was learned, by the way, from the theater that pioneered the use of artificial light in combination with notions about theater. A lot of theater lighting designers ended up as architectural lighting designers. Electric light had a strong influence on architecture throughout the 20th century that has mostly been forgotten. We had periods when people were absolutely convinced that lighting buildings with artificial light was paving the way toward a new art form — that one could bring together theater, the cinema, mural painting, urbanism, and architecture into something completely new. And artificial light stood at the core of that hope.

Stein: But that never really happened. Why?



Neumann: Somehow, all these things go through phases. Sometimes there are moments of real excitement, and then something else happens, and they are forgotten. But there were a few crucial moments and a number of important buildings and major players that deserve to be rediscovered. In a parallel history, that of the interrelationship between film and architecture, one of those crucial moments was early in the development of the motion picture at the beginning of the 20th century; 1895 was the year the Lumière brothers made one of their first films in Lyon. Putting that camera on a tram moving through Lyon captured the experience of space in the city and put it into a form that made it suddenly palpable, that made people aware of their role as citizens. The projection of light helped them to see that.

Stein: And yet you don't quite experience three-dimensional space in film. That's one of the interesting issues in teaching architecture in the 20th century — most teaching is through film and slides rather than through students experiencing the three dimensions of indoor and outdoor space or the connection that individual buildings have to each other.

Neumann: That's right. But the interesting thing about that early film was that the camera moved. So you had something that came closer than ever before to a three-dimensional experience by showing how a street unfolded in front of you. There's an enormous amount of literature in the early years of the medium about the ways film and architecture are intertwined. The French architect Robert Mallet-Stevens felt that the movies would propel the ideas of modern architecture — in the 1920s, with the lighting and the grainy black-and white film that were available, what looked best were simple cubic buildings with white facades. No ornament, just simplicity.

Stein: Did many architects consciously think of film as a tool they could use to promote modern architecture?

Neumann: There are some instances. Le Corbusier made a film called *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in the early '30s, in which he showed the Villa Savoie and scenes of Le Corbusier himself driving up to the Villa Stein in Garches and then walking through the building, ending up on the outlook on the roof — all in order to show movement through space with the camera. That's one thing. But Mallet-Stevens believed that the conditions of film — such as the lighting — were going to influence the formal language of architecture. Whereas Corbusier was in love with natural light, Mallet-Stevens was in love with artificial light — things like searchlights and floodlights on buildings that would show that simple forms are the best. But there has not been a continuous evolution of that idea. People get excited about it and make all kinds of prognostic exclamations of how architecture is going to be different, and then it's forgotten again.

Stein: Where are we now? Are we at a peak or a valley of that kind of interest?

Burj Al Arab
(Arabian Tower)
world's tallest hotel tower
Dubai
United Arab Emirates

Architects and Engineers:
WS Atkins & Partners Overseas

Lighting:
Jonathan Speirs and Associates

Neumann: Right now, I think we're approaching a peak, because we see such an enormous amount of architecture that is being illuminated. We see artists create lighting schemes for architecture. We see architects thinking of the nocturnal appearance of their buildings again. This is something that started about 10 or 15 years ago, but it still hasn't reached an intensity similar to the 1920s and '30s.

Stein: And now there are some new technologies, including LEDs and fiber optics, that we're beginning to see even on buildings around Boston. But you brought up an interesting issue, which is how we perceive the illumination of buildings at night. It turns them into their opposite, in a way. During the day, the brightest thing we see is the sun, and the buildings, in this region at any rate, are not the white modernist cubes that Mallet-Stevens was contemplating. They're made of brick. Many of them are very dark, and of course they're always casting shadows. But at night, something magical happens to buildings when they're illuminated. They become the stars.

Neumann: Exactly. This was one of the great discoveries. As soon as the technology became commercially available — around 1913 — we discovered that there's something fascinating about buildings at night, that there is a nocturnal life to buildings, that they can play a role in the nocturnal skyline as well as in the daytime skyline. Architects in the '20s and '30s began to think how they could design buildings that would look great under floodlight. That was a really strong influence. And suddenly the electricity companies were very interested in promoting this new idea, as you can imagine. They published tables that would tell you that, for instance, a brick façade would swallow so much light and therefore be much costlier to illuminate than, let's say, a façade that's covered in white stucco. So white stucco would be the ideal reflective surface to make your building shine at night without costing a fortune to illuminate. There were wonderful discussions, again in the '20s and '30s, about what happens if ornament that has been designed for natural light is illuminated from below. Imagine a Corinthian capital with acanthus leaves — the shadows are supposed to be underneath it. If you have a floodlight shining from below, all those shadows fall upward and distort the image. So you have to create a whole new set of architectural forms that look good by day and at night. And again, that led to a certain belief in simplicity as a good response. The stepped form of the setback skyscraper that was so typical in the United States in the '20s was developed to bring more daylight into the streets. But those who loved the whole idea of illumination and floodlighting discovered that it also provided the ideal form for illumination, because you could place batteries of floodlight equipment on the decks of the setbacks and you would get very elegant façades with different degrees of brightness as they went up. That is when Raymond Hood, a prominent skyscraper designer, created the term "architecture of the night." And suddenly the nocturnal city itself was seen as a whole new symbol of modernity.

Stein: And at the same time, the distortion from the spotlights — the reverse of sunlight — probably contributed to the theatricality of the city at night, the unreality of it.

Neumann: Yes. It promoted the idea of the city as a nocturnal spectacle, a sort of stage spectacle. And that sense of spectacle grew with the development of colored light, using red, yellow, and blue filters. Designers devised changing sequences of light and created "theaters in the air," as they called them, at the top of skyscrapers. That whole colored floodlighting craze became an important part of the nocturnal skyline, right into the years of the Depression. It died out when the war came and cities needed to be dark at night.

Stein: What happened with the advent of glass as a skin for buildings? Suddenly there was the possibility of merely turning on the lights inside the buildings. Here in Boston, the Hancock tower was lit when the Boston Celtics won the NBA title — there was a big number "1," several rooms wide, 60 stories tall. Are there other examples of lighting buildings from the inside?

Neumann: Absolutely. A great early example is the 1958 Seagram Building in New York. Mies van der Rohe worked with one of the most prominent lighting designers of the time, Richard Kelly, who had also studied architecture. Kelly designed a perimeter lighting system in the ceiling, very close to the windows, and its only purpose was to light up the building at night. Contemporaries called the building "the tower of light," because it appeared to glow from the inside. It was quite the opposite of the floodlighting elsewhere in Manhattan and much more effective than simply leaving the office lights on.

Stein: Leaving the lights on is also a form of celebration — when the abstraction of the "theater of the air," as you put it, comes to earth in the form of festivals and celebrations such as First Night in Boston.

Neumann: It's actually a very old tradition. We shouldn't forget that, although the arrival of electricity changed the whole idea of illuminating architecture, there is a prehistory that goes way back into the 18th century and even earlier, when cities were illuminated to celebrate certain events — candlelight and torches for a royal marriage, for example. Saint Peter's in Rome was illuminated once a year — there are still hundreds of little candle-holders on the dome. The candles were lit, and there were big fireworks, called the Girandola, down the river at the Castello San D'Angelo. And the great world and industrial fairs in Paris, San Francisco and Chicago, for instance, became the testing grounds for new forms of architectural illuminations.

Stein: If we acknowledge that the lighting of buildings at night is a very powerful thing, then we have to ask, Whom does it empower? It empowers the individuals or the companies that own the buildings, most obviously. But I wonder if there is a tradition of empowering people in the street by making this theater in the night. Are we merely the audience for these spectacles, or are there times when we're on stage, too?



Carew Tower
Cincinnati, c.1930-40

Woolworth Building
New York City, 1916

Tribune Tower
Chicago, c.1925

Tower of Jewels
Panama Pacific Exposition
San Francisco, 1915

postcards courtesy Dietrich Neumann/Brown University

Neumann: There are many different kinds of display and many different ways people react to them. As you say, there is on one level the display of a firm that wants to be known and recognized in the skyline. But there are celebrations that empower the citizens of a city by making them feel part of its worldliness and its beauty. The question of empowerment is one of the most interesting, because there's not one single answer. Who profits? Who enjoys it? Who is the actor and who is the director of this spectacle?

Stein: In the 1970s, we had what has been termed an energy crisis — what was perhaps actually a distribution and price crisis. But during that time, a moralistic fervor infected our cities and caused us to turn off all the lights.

Neumann: It terminated all the floodlighting across the United States and Europe. Even the White House in Washington switched off the lights. In many cases, the amount of money spent on the lighting was much less than the money that we continued to spend on things like air conditioning. It was an important symbolic gesture, but it killed the interest in nocturnal illumination for quite some time; a lot of the lights were not switched on again after the crisis abated. It was a significant point in the history of illumination, which can be traced from the enormous initial enthusiasm in the '20s and '30s, followed by blackouts during the war, after which a lot of lights were switched on again. But after the war, the whole condition was different — the new buildings of the 1950s were not as easy to light as setback skyscrapers. So illumination continued at a lesser scale, and then it stopped again in the '70s. And now we're in an upswing that started in the '80s.

Stein: In his book *Night Flight*, the French writer and pilot Saint-Exupéry said this: "The villages were lighting up constellations that greeted each other across the dusk. The Earth grew spangled with light signals, as each house lit its star, searching the vastness of the night as a lighthouse sweeps the sea. Now every place that sheltered human life was sparkling." This is the sort of view that we have now, at the beginning of the 21st century, when we fly over cities like Boston. We can see brightly illuminated buildings, and we see their opposite, too, which in Boston is the Charles River. The Charles reflects sunlight during the day, but it's a ribbon of blackness at night. You are living in a city, Providence, Rhode Island, which has done something extraordinary to its river with the WaterFire event that seems to capture a lot of these ideas.

Neumann: We celebrated the 100th WaterFire last September. It is an astonishing event, and I'm amazed, again and again, when I see thousands of people attracted by what is such a simple idea. Metal baskets are placed in the middle of the river, filled with wood, and lit up, music plays from loudspeakers, and there are even a few boats on the river stoking the fires. Now we also have concerts going on and food stands and other attractions. But it shows the power of light in celebrating community and the role of citizens. It shows that we can do something to bring life back to our cities at night.

Stein: There's an opposite attitude that is abroad in the culture, too — some people near cities are becoming increasingly protective of their darkness.

Neumann: A very good point. A friend who is an astronomer and physicist gave me a lot of information to show that my love for nocturnal illumination has its dark side, so to speak. And that is, of course, the effect of overpowering the nocturnal sky, of eliminating the beauty of the night sky and the stars because of all the spilled light from streetlights and building lights. Some people who are concerned about this have formed the "dark sky movement"— beautiful name, isn't it? — and are trying to promote the idea that we should learn to avoid light spill by lighting only objects, not the sky. It's an important idea. And it can be done. The technology gets better and better all the time. I think all good lighting designers would agree that brightness is not their goal. Lighting can be subtle and can avoid that blinding effect. Good designers work with contrasts and with moods.

Stein: You talked about the attention to the role of lighting in architecture and urbanism in the early 20th century. What is the nature of the current discussion?

Neumann: What I see now is an attempt to get artists and lighting designers involved in creating meaningful urban monuments. One example is a building in New York, the Forty-Second Street Studios by Platt Byard Dovell, that was finished last year. The entire façade is a constant play of colored light designed by Anne Militello, who also does theater lighting. The building doesn't advertise anything. It doesn't really profit from people recognizing it, because it's for a very specific audience — actors and dancers who use the studios behind this illuminated façade. So it is really a civic gesture, a contribution to the excitement of Times Square without the commercial background, which is of course behind most of the lights on Times Square. It works as a thoughtful reflector of what is happening around it, because the computer-driven color sequences change every day during the courses of the seasons. For example, it changes to a faster sequence on Saturdays, when there is much more going on in Times Square, than on Mondays, when the whole façade calms down. And so it's a reflective medium. If you have the time and the knowledge to stand there, it tells you a little bit about the action around it.



photo: Barnaby Evans (www.waterfire.org)

WaterFire
sculpture installation
Providence, Rhode Island

Barnaby Evans, artist

There are other examples — lighting designs by people like Jonathan Speirs or Motoko Ishii, for instance — that work as gigantic clocks or calendars with different colors and lights at different times of day or different times of the year. And in a way, they help to manifest an awareness of the natural world, which of course is important in our technological age when one can easily live through a year without encountering much of nature's powers. They help to create a new awareness of our life in the city, they serve as orientation points, and they become new magnets in the city. And all of that of course has to do with urbanism.



Forty-Second Street Studios, New York City

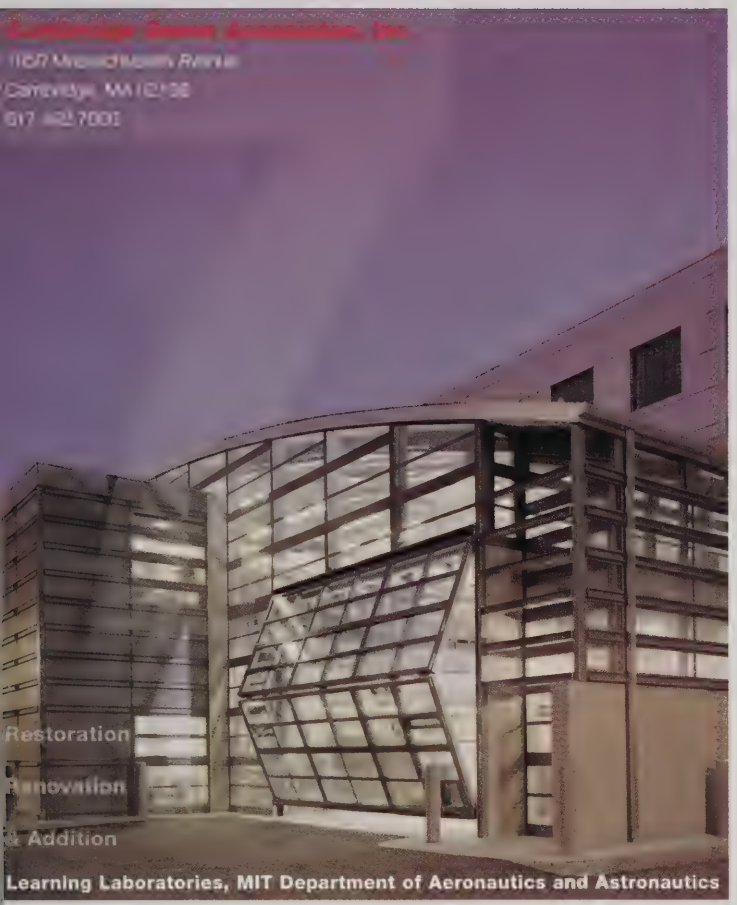
Architect: Platt Byard Dovell
Lighting: Anne Militello

Stein: We have an older example here in Boston, at the old Hancock building. The light at the top is red or blue, sometimes steady, sometimes flashing. But it's not there just for the glory of having light flashing on the city. It has a function — it's actually a weather beacon. Someone on the custodial staff working down in the basement gets a weather report and flips a switch and 7,000 fluorescent tubes light up at the top that are wonderfully archaic in at this time when we could listen to the radio ourselves. Everyone knows the code: "Clear blue, clear view. Flashing blue, clouds are due. Steady red, rain ahead. Flashing red, snow instead." It even tells us if the Red Sox game is going to be rained out, by flashing the snow code.

Neumann: Yes, that's a wonderful example that dates from the 1940s. And it's actually a parallel with buildings such as the Forty-Second Street Studios, where commercial identity is not the primary purpose. They help citizens identify with their city. Light can play an important role in keeping the public realm connected to more substantial values, even if we haven't fully explored the possibilities. G.K. Chesterton, the British writer, came to Manhattan in the 1920s and said exactly that. He thought the illumination he saw was all a lovely spectacle, but that it was wrong to use the power of light only for advertising and commercial identity without any deeper meaning. He felt it should be connected to religion, to philosophy, to things that have profound meaning.

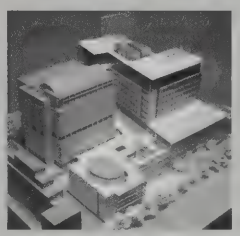
Stein: Even with deeper meaning, illuminated civic spaces are competing with another light source these days, and that's television. Television is in some ways the most ubiquitous and most invasive light source we can imagine.

Neumann: Absolutely. And there's no doubt that television sets and now computers have in fact taken people away from the streets and from communal gatherings for the last few decades. It certainly has contributed to the rarity of nighttime crowds in most of our cities. But illuminated architecture and civic spaces can compete with the isolation that comes with our encounters with television and computers. Seeing 10,000 people on a summer Saturday evening in Providence at WaterFire confirms it. They're walking around, talking, drinking a glass of wine, listening to music — not sitting in front of their computers or television sets. It's a wonderful experience. ■■■



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Letter from San Francisco

The fetish of architectural restraint

by John King



Cities exist within the mind as surely as they are carved into the earth. There's the physical place — the built terrain where people work and live and play — and then there's the mental map that's different for each person, highlighting the "good" areas and blurring the rest.

The disparity looms especially large in San Francisco. The freest city in America in many ways, this city has been a social laboratory for decades. But when it comes to buildings, there's suspicion or even hostility for any new design that wouldn't have been embraced by a postmodernist circa 1986.

Let's put it another way: Here's a city that pats itself on the back for offering fertile soil to beatniks in the '50s and hippies a decade later. In the 1970s, it was synonymous with the emerging visibility of Gay America. Most recently, it beckoned as the mother lode of the Internet gold rush. No matter what the era, San Francisco shows itself porous enough to absorb new lifestyles — as a handy utopia where you can pursue whatever dream or distraction you wish. But check out the visual icons. Beyond the Golden Gate Bridge, a marvelous icon of engineering, what comes to mind are cable cars and brightly painted Victorian houses.

The chasm of that disconnect startles me — even though I spent seven years as a newspaper reporter covering Boston's growth during the '80s, an era when architects did everything but trot out genealogy charts to show how faithfully their new towers evoked older models. Now, writing about urban design for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, I find myself trying to convey the strange ways in which this "progressive" city makes a fetish of architectural restraint. The conventional wisdom is that buildings should offer reassuring balm, quiet comfort, and good manners above all else.

From the Boston perspective, perhaps this sounds like old news. San Francisco's penchant for historicism can't be more excessive than the red-brick drapery of the South End, right?

Think again. Boston — at least in the eyes of this outsider who relished the place and misses it still — is a city where history remains tangled up with the present. Politically, ethnically, architecturally. When something is built to ape the norm in Beacon Hill or the Back Bay or a dozen other neighborhoods, the norm is strong and pervasive. If this desire to "respect our surroundings'" shapes the appearance of newer Hub buildings — granted, often excessively — at least those surroundings aren't just a figment of some opponent's imagination.

San Francisco, by contrast, is as eclectic physically as it is socially. That's part of the appeal. It is a place to bask in the moment, to revel in the sudden unexpected views. For many residents — except the ones who announce "I'm a native San Franciscan" given any slim pretext — the city was at its seductive peak the moment they arrived. That moment is what they remember best.

What has all this to do with architecture? This: The *real* San Francisco — a parochial city of 775,000 with strong class divisions and middling public services and unsavory streets where the ranks of the genuinely homeless are swelled by indigents and petty crooks — is of less importance than the city that people carry in their mind — in other words, the place that seduced them. And this chosen race

oesn't want a lover that surprises them with new elights. The initial passion is what must be reserved. San Franciscans love the *idea* of San rancisco, even if daily life bears little resemblance o the idyllic dream.

People here say their neighborhood is coherent, or here's a style that predominates, but you look round and it's all motley,"says Tim Culvahouse, an rchitect who moved to the Bay Area in 1993 after eaching architecture for seven years at the Rhode sland School of Design. "Outside of the postcards, ou rarely find a long row of Victorians. When a eighborhood group says that what I'm doing isn't onsistent with the character of the neighborhood, 's hard to know how to answer."

est all this sound too vague, too much like that ouchy-feely buzz of which Californians are so fond, t me end with a specific example of the disconnect etween reality and wishful thinking.

he *cause célèbre* this year in local architectural rcles is Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas' design for a rada boutique near Union Square. By the Pritzker rize winner's standards, it is demure — but this is oolhaas, after all. Which means a 10-story uilding with stainless-steel walls. Instead of indows, there are 12,000 porthole-like glass disks o more than 7.5 inches in diameter. The ground oor has glass walls; the sixth floor is a public rrace wrapped in a stylish version of a chain-link nce.

hen I wrote about the building, *Chronicle* editors ut it on page one with a headline that played up y comment on how the appearance might be kened to that of a cheese grater. Intriguingly, the egative e-mails I received were outnumbered by the ositive ones. But the critics were emphatic that ada was more than a bad design, it was, well, crilegious: "This building would be an insult to its eighbors, and to all those who care about good chitecture," warned one opponent, while another etted that if Prada becomes reality, "this building ill forever remain a pimple on the beautiful face of an Francisco."

mong Prada's foes? The staff of the Planning epartment, which urged rejection not (officially) n aesthetic grounds, but because the design pposedly was not in compliance with the dictates the Kearny-Mason-Market-Sutter Conservation istrict, a 36-block area. This district includes several dozen handsome commercial landmarks from the Beaux Arts era, but it is not some Bay Village-like enclave, or an evocative stroll *à la* Newbury Street. It is a gangling hodge-podge of urban America that includes modern hotel towers and detritus from every decade. The "district" in fact is a protective mechanism, created in the mid-'80s because people were horrified by the checkerboard granite walls of Philip Johnson's Neiman Marcus department store on Union Square.

So Prada flunked the planning review because it lacked a cornice. Because steel is not a "preferred material." Because the ground floor does not line up explicitly with its neighbors. The staff report insisted that, under the district guidelines, good modern design remains possible. Not stated is the reality, that "modern" buildings are welcome only if they toe the line.

Now here's the surprise: the City Planning Commission rejected the staff recommendation and approved the Prada design by unanimous vote in September. It may be that the commission is more accepting of change than professional planners. It may be that Mayor Willie Brown, a fashion plate who chooses his commissioners on the basis of malleability, let it be known that he didn't want Prada to go *pfft*. Whatever the rationale, San Francisco will soon see if bold is better.

The point of this tale isn't to depict Prada as a work of art; I'd classify it as a nervy gamble worth taking. But it's odd how a place that embraces new cuisines and new technologies and new political causes recoils at the sight of new architecture. As far as many people are concerned, it's better to have stage-sets. Better to measure victory — at least in terms of design review — by what gets whittled away.

Even though people don't come here looking for a bracing jolt of new design, San Francisco remains a wondrous city in many ways, Still, it'd be nice if this most diverse of cities welcomed architectural diversity as well. You can only ride a cable car so many times. ■■■

John King, who reported on growth and architecture in Boston from 1982 until 1989 for newspapers including the *Boston Globe*, is the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s urban design writer. He can be reached at jking@sfchronicle.com.



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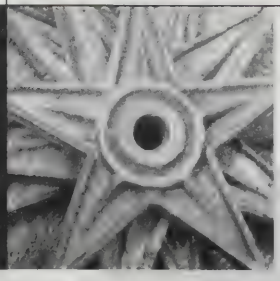
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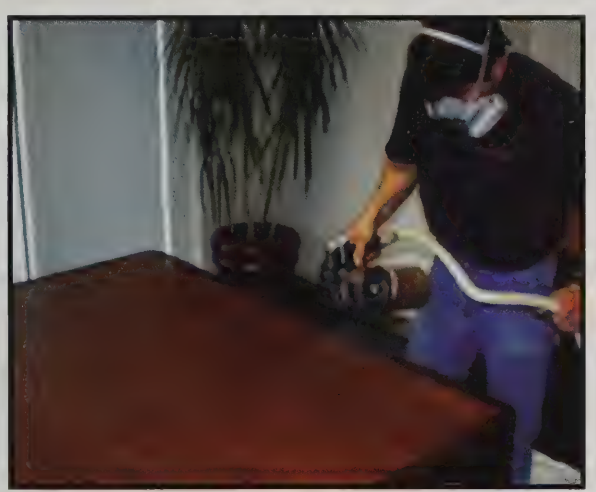
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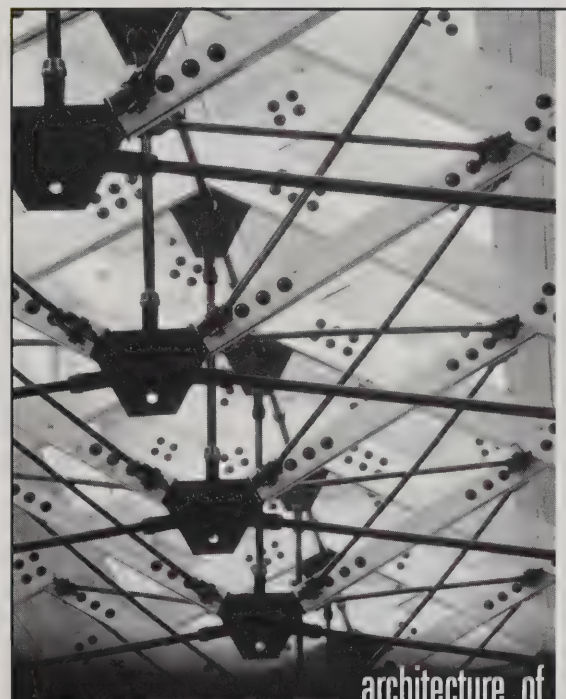


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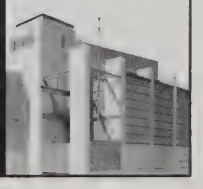
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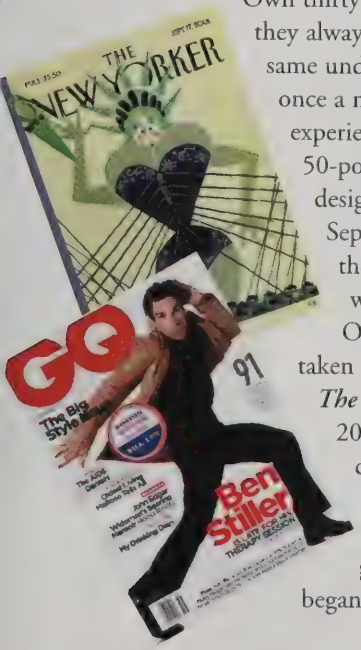
Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA



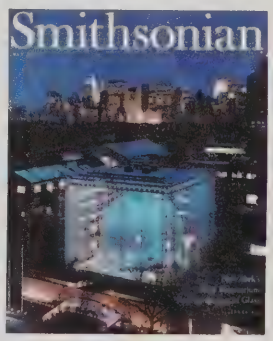
Let there be light... And fire, and water. Our sister city to the south is honored in this tribute to Providence and its remarkable rejuvenation through its rivers. ("Rejuvenating Waters," ***Preservation***, September/October 2001). Do you remember when the Providence River was not a river, but instead "the widest bridge in the world"? Only 20 years ago, this heart of Providence was covered by a concrete slab and a sea of parked cars. Today, the concrete's gone, and parking is scarce as thousands flock on summer and fall evenings not to shop, nor to pay admission, but simply to enjoy "WaterFire" — a combination of public art and public spectacle. WaterFire and its effect on the social and physical fabric of the city is one of many initiatives described in this celebration of Rhode Island's rivers. Rivers once paved the way for Rhode Island industry, and thus sparked development of cities and the state itself. The rediscovery of these waterways may again lead the way to its future.

Go by the rules... "1. Don't specialize...14. There is not potential in every thing or every project...21. Own thirty pairs of the same socks, so that they always match, and thirty pairs of the same underwear. Then do your laundry once a month...24. Consume experiences, not things..." So goes the 50-point life philosophy, by top-dog designer Karim Rashid (*GQ*, September 2001). And how do these 50 points work? Fantastically well, according to John Seabrook. Or at least Rashid's career has taken off (hey — he made *GQ*!) In *The New Yorker* (September 17, 2001), Seabrook interviews Rashid, discussing his work, design culture, and how the beautiful design of everyday objects is going to change the world. It all began with an $8 trash can.



More Rules... "Place bets on ideas without much heed to their projected returns. Ignore what has worked before. Goad perfectly happy people into fights among themselves. And as for the people who stick their fingers in their ears and chant, 'I'm not listening, I'm not listening,' when [clients] make suggestions? Praise and promote them." Seem counterintuitive? Try this: Hire the candidate you have a gut feeling against. These rules certainly fly in the face of traditional management techniques. However, they may be perfect if your business is innovation. Robert Sutton has studied "The Weird Rules of Creativity"(***Harvard Business Review,*** September 2001) for more than a decade, focusing on practices that rely on "seeing old problems in new ways." Citing many successful examples, this may be a must-read for our industry.

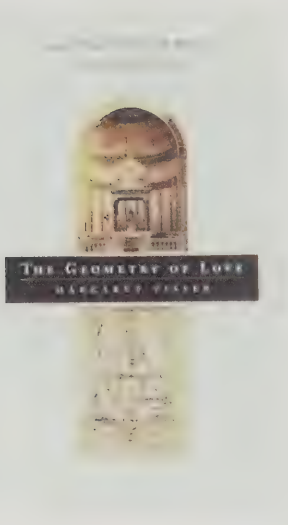
Back to the future... "What style do you design?" Can you answer that question? We all should be able to, according to David Watkin, who also thinks we should all do classical. In "Why a Classical Lincoln Center is Visionary" (***City Journal***, Summer 2001), Watkin builds an interesting but flawed argument to tear down "the whole complex and build up a new, lasting, architecturally distinguished one in the classical style" instead. Interesting because Watkin describes how architects throughout history — Michelangelo, Jefferson, Sir John Soane — have repeatedly mined the classical orders, innovatively reinterpreting them for a new age. Flawed because the Modernist take-no-prisoners attitudes and projects he condemns are now a half-century out-of-date. And wait — Doesn't the "clear the slate, replace it with something better, something new" directive sound awfully Modern?



It's half full... Glass is it. We're in the great age of glass, argues Jeffrey Hogrefe in ***Smithsonian*** ("The Ascent of Glass, " July 2001). It's clearer, it's stronger, it's appropriately warmer and cooler than it's ever been. This cover story highlights this material's role in recent architecture, from Polshek's Rose Center to Viñoly's Commerce Center to Foster's Reichstag dome, to your average Andersen window. Hogrefe describes technical innovations, manufacturing processes, material properties, aesthetics, and historical significance with equal intelligence, accessibility, and enthusiasm. Forget titanium panels. They're already hopelessly retro. ■■■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches architecture at Smith College.

Books



The Geometry of Love

by Margaret Visser
North Point Press, 2001

Reviewed by
James Hudson Crissman FAIA

In a book that is billed as an architectural guide to a building, it is a surprise to find not a single drawing or photograph between the covers. Only on the dust jacket is there a 2" x 3" photograph of the apse of the church, Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura (St. Agnes Outside the Walls) in Rome. Yet this is one of the most unusual, and most delightful, architectural narratives I have read, suggesting perhaps that a thousand well-chosen words are worth a good picture. Having visited Sant'Agnese in 1998 gave me a possible advantage over the reader who has not been there, but this is a book about the Church, its history, myths, and traditions, at least as much as it is about the specific church chosen by the author.

St. Agnes was one of the early martyrs of the Christian Church, a 12-year-old who was killed in 305, and this church was built on the site of her grave, then outside the walls of the city. Margaret Visser, a practicing Roman Catholic who is extremely knowledgeable about her faith, offers this building as an object lesson, providing a thoughtful look at the forces that have shaped the Church over its two millennia.

In the author's words, "A person can come into a silent church in order to respond to the building and its meaning. This can produce an experience as profoundly moving as that of attending a performance. The same thing cannot be said of visiting an empty theatre." In thinking about this book and its subject in the context of theater, one needs to remember that a theater building is itself not dependent upon symbolism; rather, it is a screen upon which something is played. A church, on the other hand, is more like a book in its didactic role, originally teaching the faithful through familiar images the story of their faith, the Church, its saints and martyrs. The liturgy offered in the church can certainly be likened to the drama of theater — "the Mass as dance" is a phrase that comes to mind.

Sant'Agnese is a building with a story, a plot, and it is this story that is told so effectively in The *Geometry of Love*. I found it so moving that, halfway through the book, I bought copies for two friends who shared my trip in 1998. Though the author relies solely on prose, the book offers rich descriptive material about the architectural and decorative detail. It is a good lesson for those of us who feel lost without our slides.

James Hudson Crissman FAIA is a consulting architect whose clients include many religious communities and institutions.

Architecture Actor and Audience

by Iain Mackintosh
Routledge, 1993

Reviewed by
George Marsh AIA

Ah, the sweat and spit of the Bard…the actor climbs out from behind you, the paying viewer, and speaks to all while you find yourself in the midst of the performance. This experience — unknown to many modern theater-goers — is the basis of Iain Mackintosh's *Architecture Actor and Audience*.

Iain Mackintosh — formerly an actor, Oxford scholar, and founder of a theater company — is today one of the world's leading theater designers. His book, first published in 1993, has become a standard textbook in theater curricula; for the architect venturing into the world of theater design, it is a must-read.

Mackintosh's thesis is the importance of energy between the actor and the audience. His work focuses on the arena of the performance — not the support, back-of-house, or lobby areas. True theater allows the actor to see, sense, and respond to the viewer; the architecture of this space creates this environment of interaction. Analyzing this space in geometric terms, he notes that the theater is "found space in which the original line between stage and auditorium is dissolved, [and] the action is advanced into the territory of the audience."

The book is organized into three parts to promote this theory. First, he traces the historic groundwork from Elizabethan theater in the 1590s to the 18th century, when the orchestra pit separated audience from the stage, to the reintroduction of the thrust stage by Tyrone Guthrie in 1953. The second portion of the book examines contemporary theater architecture, including a very insightful discussion about the process and the players — owner, theater designer, actors, and architects. The last third of the work focuses on the future of theater design.

The strongest criticism of this boo is the density of its history of the theater. The book assumes and demands a strong prior knowledge of theater — the best "audience" for the book is the theater community itself. Also, the author theory has a strong prejudice against venues like Boston's Wang Center, which many have grown t love; Mackintosh criticizes such theaters and their ornate decoratio as places where "the architect's job [is] not very different from that of the creator of a Rococo church."

Iain Mackintosh's personal energy emphasizes his passionate perspective on theater design — beyond this text, his words and practice push architects, owners, and theater committees alike to build his thesis — sometimes with trepidation and turbulence. But th result, demonstrated in his book and in his career, is the rediscover importance of energy between actor and audience. No one will b disappointed with this performance.

George E. Marsh, Jr., AIA is a principal Payette Associates in Boston and has designed theaters with Iain Mackintos at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, and Shakespeare & C in Lenox, Massachusetts. In these projects, no spectator is more than 36 feet from the actor.



ıe Experience Economy: ork is Theatre and ery Business a Stage

B. Joseph Pine II
d James H. Gilmore
rvard Business School
ess, 1999

viewed by
ginia Quinn

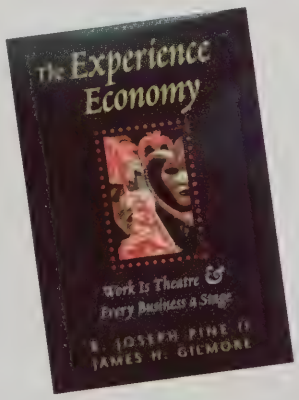
w can trendy cafés thrive while rging outrageously more for a of coffee than their more ndane competitors? The authors his book propose that Starbucks its ilk have tapped into what y call the emerging "Experience nomy," the latest stage in the lution of our economy from mmodities to goods to services. ead of merely offering a ightforward product or service, h forward-thinking companies value by staging rich, com- ing experiences that combine ertainment, education, escape, aestheticism to engage their comers in a personal, sensory, norable way.

at is the role of the architect in Experience Economy? The k promotes architects as being ng the specialists who can help inesses create the settings that lly immerse their customers. architects can also apply some he principles described in the k, such as making the most of ory stimulants, to enrich the gn of non-themed venues.

book also raises questions ut how architects might frame r own practices in response to Experience Economy. The pters "Work is Theatre" and w Act Your Part" remind us whenever we work in front of ent, an act of theater occurs. eloping a theatrical mindset in m encourages staff members to form" with consciousness all cts of their work, rather than go through the motions. yone has a role to play that ances the "production" as a le: the gracious receptionist, meticulous drafter, the attentive ect manager. The authors even o far to suggest that interviews become auditions — putting candidates into real situations and seeing how they act.

Architects who embrace this outlook can throw themselves into the role of aesthetician — validating taste, drawing the client into the dramatic experience of designing a building. The architect can weave a veil of mystery around the process of design, speaking an arcane language and behaving flamboyantly or clinically as the production demands. The studio is the setting for drawing clients into the perceived glamour of the architect's world, surrounding them with materials, drawings, and models — and serving them coffee from a stylish Bauhaus silver service.

The premise of using the model of the theater to differentiate and add value to your business adds an intriguing weapon to the arsenal of architects who every day do battle against the commoditization of design services. But it seems to me that one fundamental flaw in basing a business plan on the *Experience Economy* is that it really only works in a thriving market. When dot-commers are pulling down six-figure salaries, $3 for a café latte is pin money; when they're laid off, Dunkin' Donuts java at 99 cents, sans ambiance, tastes just fine.



Virginia Quinn is an A/E marketing consultant based in Arlington, Massachusetts. The former marketing director of Goody, Clancy & Associates, she has also served as director of the Society for Marketing Professional Services, Boston Chapter.

Designing the New Museum: Building a Destination

James Grayson Trulove
Rockport Publishers, 2000

Reviewed by
Kimberly S. Alexander, PhD

Designing the New Museum is a lushly photographed look at the museum — a building that seems to be under construction in every city throughout the world. A foreword by David Levy, the director of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC, provides an excellent overview of the current phenomenon, and an introduction by architectural historian Il Kim sets the stage for the subsequent discussion of museum design by James Grayson Trulove. Together, they make the point that the "new museum" has come a long way from the dusty curiosity cabinets of the 19th century.

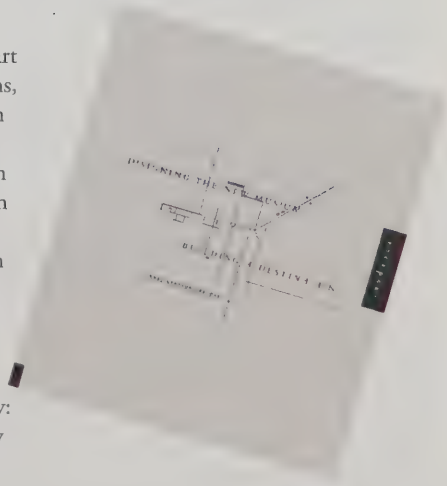
Levy briefly examines the reasons for the current clamor for these high-budget, high-design structures, offering as an example the Corcoran's own recent experience with architect Frank Gehry. Il Kim's introduction also touches on a crucial point: It is hard to judge the architecture of the new museums because "we have lost the strict norms for the social role of museums that were defined through political and educational discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."

Trulove's selection of some two dozen museums (grouped into three categories: general-interest art museums, specialized art museums, and "other") focuses our attention on the astonishing diversity of modern museums, many of which may be unfamiliar to an American audience. Among the highlights are Steven Holl's Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki and Alvaro Siza's Museu de Serralves in Porto, Portugal. Projects by New England architects underscore this diversity: the Gulf Coast Museum of Art by Thompson and Rose, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) by Bruner/Cott.

Despite the impressive range of Trulove's material, his book nevertheless fails to answer some of the most burning questions regarding the current popularity of this building genre: What does the design of the new museum say about the museum, the museum visitor, the museum administration and, more broadly, this burgeoning culture of the museum? What is the role of entertainment? How can formerly elitist institutions adapt to the new multiculturalism? The lack of connective tissue between the featured projects in itself poses yet more queries. What do these buildings collectively say about design, about the marketing of culture, about regional differences?

Despite breathtaking, informative photographs, the drawings and plans included for each museum are generally either too small or too schematic to explain the projects, many of which are quite complex and clearly went through dozens of iterations before reaching their final form. This is surprising in a book that claims to be about the design process. Still, *Designing the New Museum* is a good starting point for exploration of the contemporary museum and would be a helpful addition to any design library.

Kimberly S. Alexander, PhD, is curator of architecture at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.





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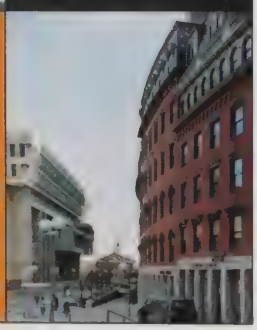
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This "annual experiment in temporary community" grew from a California beach get-together to a week-long event in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada. "It's anarchistic, ritualist, primal, and art." It's, like, so California and, like, so cool.

WaterFire
www.waterfire.org

Who would have thought that our neighbors in Providence, Rhode Island, could be cooler than a bunch of Californians partying in the desert? You owe it to yourself to make the trip. Water, bonfires, boats, people, music. It's mystical, it's magical, it's multisensory. And it's free.

Art Historians' Guide to the Movies
www.rci.rutgers.edu/~eliason/ahgttm.htm

Apparently a lot of people are going to the movies to study the sets. Here's a fun compendium of well known works of art and architecture and the films in which they've appeared.

Festivals
www.festivals.com

"The online gathering place of the worldwide festival community." You probably didn't realize there was such a community, or that there is a veritable "festival industry." Sadly, you've already missed the First International Accordian Festival in San Antonio and the Green Tea Gala in Japan, but if you hurry, you just might catch the Festival of Whirling Dervishes in Turkey.

Theatre History on the Web
www.videoccasions-nw.com/history/jack.html

A well-organized, thorough resource, maintained by a former professor of theater history. Links to research, archives, databases, online publications, and organizations.

The Unofficial Walt Disney Imagineering Page
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Other Voices by Dana Bisbee

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum



photo: © Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

The best way to see the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is to shut your eyes. Stand at the entry to the central courtyard and let some other sense apprehend the grandeur around you. Listen to voices throughout the building seep past the four stories of balconies, through the balustrades, around the statuary, and echo faintly off the walls. Stand in any gallery and try to feel the space. Inhale the floral scents from the rigorously maintained garden planted specifically for sensory effect. The perfect word to describe what you feel is *drama*.

A museum is a building that houses art, but the Gardner Museum is itself the work of art. Isabella had drama to spare and meant for you to feel it infuse the house she built and the art she personally placed there. Her museum is a theater; it is also a performance. Stand in it with eyes closed and feelings primed and you might even feel the woman herself make an entrance upon her self-designed stage.

Want proof? Open your eyes and go to the Spanish Cloister, the interior corridor beside the courtyard.

Though it is no longer used as such, Isabella intended this to be the entrance and arranged there an extremely dramatic welcome for visitors. At the end of the long tiled corridor, ensconced in a Spanish-Moorish frame, is my favorite painting — "El Jaleo" ("The Commotion") by John Singer Sargent. A woman dances the flamenco. Her arm is extended, her skirt flounced and caught midway through a swirl on a tiny high-heeled shoe. Guitarists seated along a stucco wall have strummed a note. This is a specific moment — a nanosecond captured and frozen, the sound wave from the guitars sealed forever.

The odd thing is that Sargent painted the source of light at the bottom right as if from firelight. Isabella lit the painting that way, too, from the bottom right, the real light superimposed upon the imagined. It's an unusual way to light a painting and might have even caused *un jaleo* among the first viewers. Her theatrical feat was to comprehended Sargent's vision and make the physical environment around the painting succumb to it. You cannot look at the painting without thinking about Isabella's thoughts. She similarly bent the physical environment of the entire museum to her vision. That is great theater.

Walking through the Gardner Museum, you must wonder about the lady. It is as if her vision and spirit are also on exhibit. But the sight of her is unsettling. In the third-floor Gothic Room, Sargent's 1888 portrait of her a age 47 shows a short, wasp-waisted, and otherwise unattractive woman. Taking a cue from photography, Sargent softened her look and deliberately painted her face out of focus.

But this woman was the reigning star, the Princess Diana of her day. She was the center of a Boston society that was simultaneously shocked and awed by her. Both Bohemian and aristocrat, her favorite foods were doughnuts and champagne. She was an omnivorous collector whose taste spanned the complete history and geography of fine art — feudal Japan, Renaissance Europe, and her own contemporary Boston.

She died in 1924, leaving behind an ironclad will that forever keeps the museum, its art, and even the way people remember her just the wa she wanted it. Nothing can be moved. A memorial service must be held for her each ye in the museum. The force of her personality has lasted nearly 80 years. Her spirit remains. Perhaps her ghost lingers as well.

You can walk through any other museum in the world and not care a bit about who the architect was and not have any feeling at all about the curator who arranged the paintings on the stark, flat, evenly lit walls. Isabella Stewart Gardner was her own architect and curator. She was her own director, stage designer, and actress. And when I walk throu her museum, she is all I can think about.

■■■

Dana Bisbee is society editor at the *Boston Herald*, where h writes the "Social Scene" column and feature stories. He h won awards from the New England Associated Press New Executives Association and New England Press Associatio A contributor to *The Oxford Companion to Crime & Mystery Writing*, he is the author of a one-act play, *The Cask of Amontillado*, adapted from the Edgar Allan Poe story and is currently at work on his first novel. He has also performed a supernumerary with Boston Lyric Opera, in roles includin the Innkeeper in *Falstaff* and Roberti, the torturer in *Tosca*.



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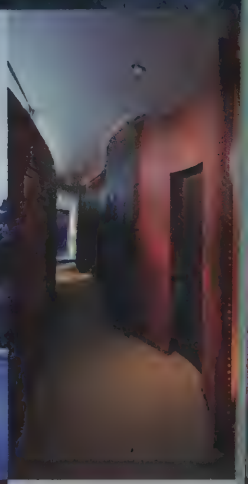
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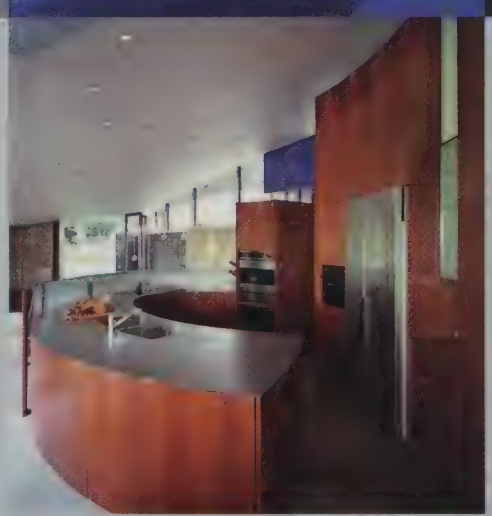
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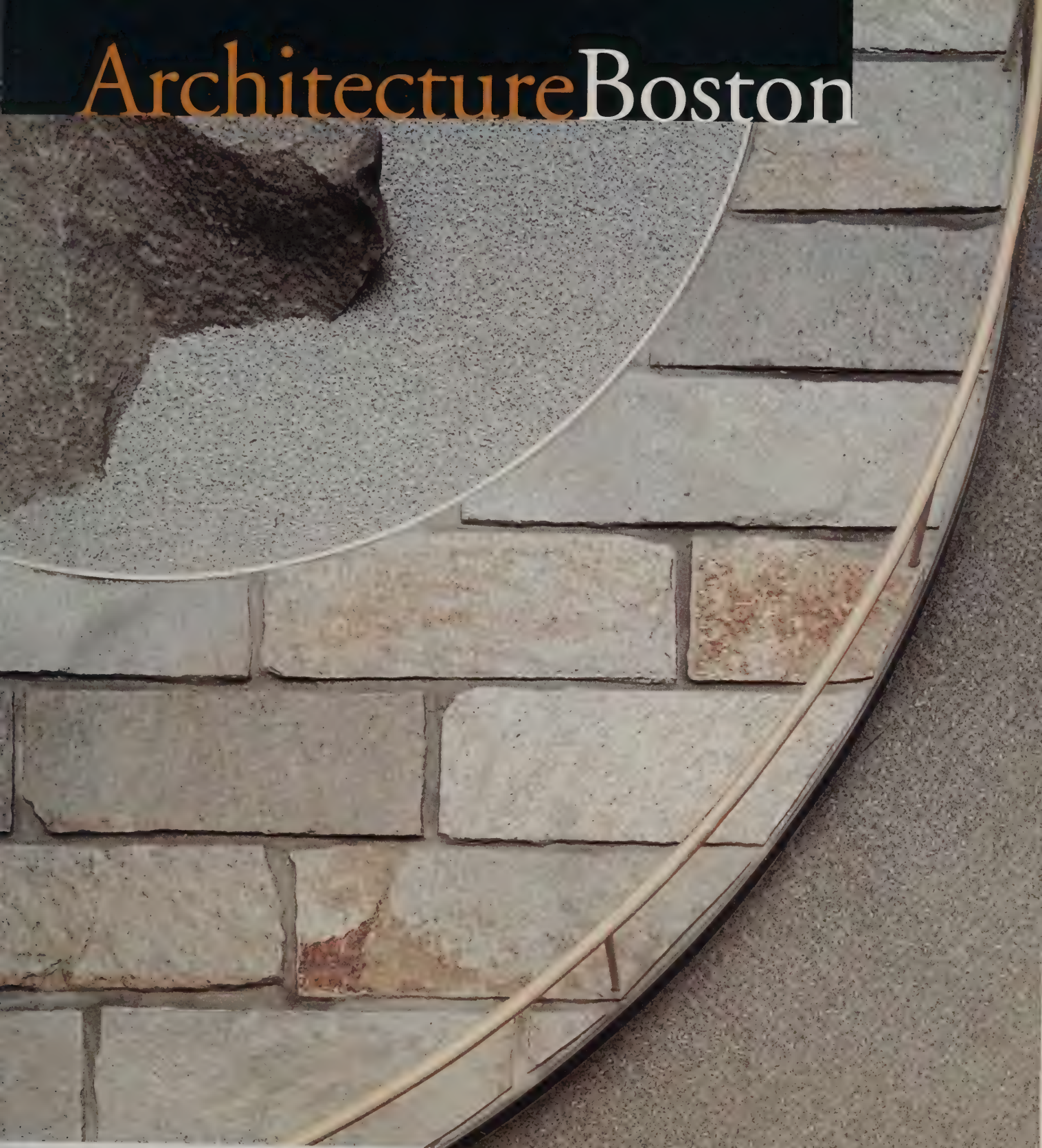
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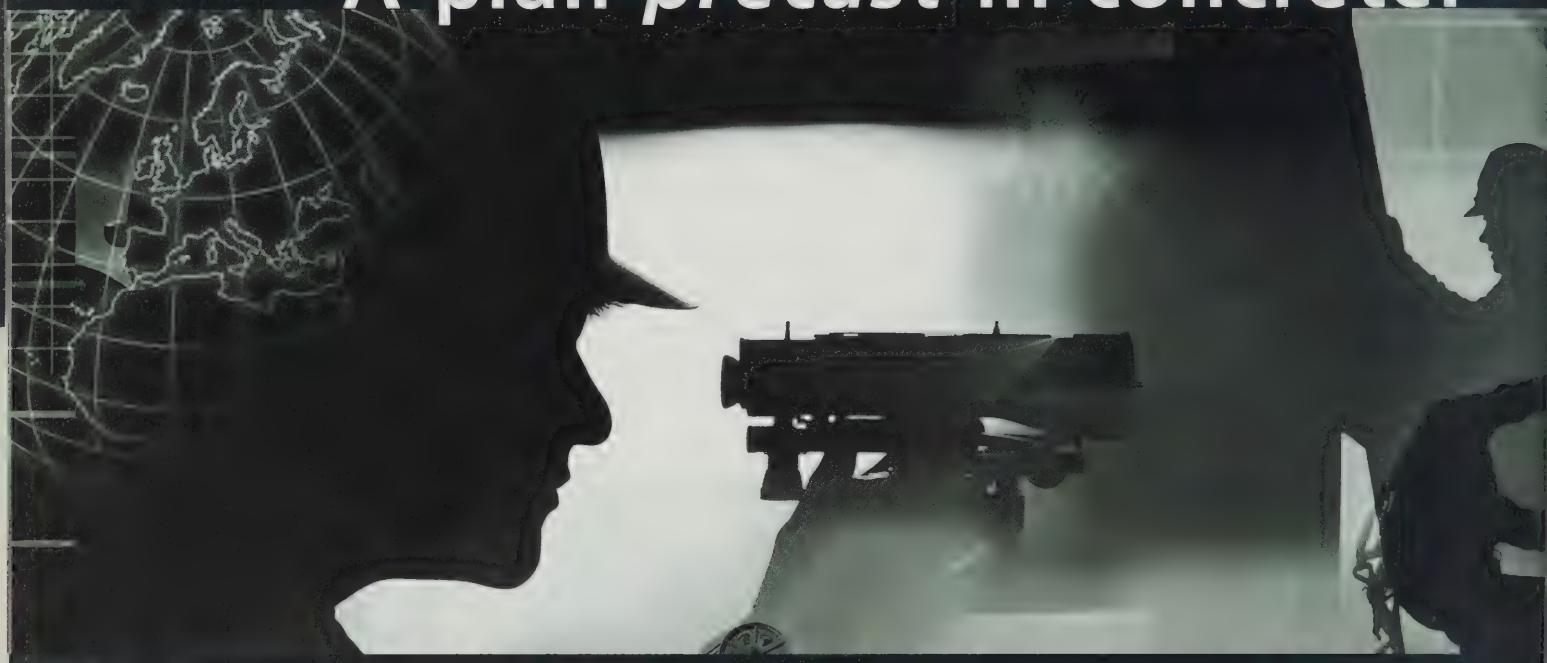


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The Boston Society of Architects review of the people and places that influenced design in the year 2001



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Editor
Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

Managing Editor
Nancy Jenner

Editorial Assistant
Kate Kelly

Art Director
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Contributing photographers
Bob Kramer
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Peter Vanderwarker

Advertising
Richard Vendola
BSA Sales Office
1645 Falmouth Rd #1A
Centerville, MA 02632
Tel: 800-996-3863
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rvendola@capecod.net

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Sacred Grounds September 11

It is too soon. This is the time for year-in-review punditry, for wise reflections on growth and loss, on accomplishment and failure. But this year, things are different, and it is not possible to address adequately the single most important event of 2001. It is still too soon to understand, too soon to rebuild, too soon to move on.

Our response to the devastation of the September 11 attacks will take many forms. World leaders will implement Important Things under a global spotlight; the rest of us will more likely stumble across important things in small and unexpected places.

One such small and unexpected place is a paperback volume that has been tucked into my bookcase since *ArchitectureBoston* reviewed it in our Winter 2000 issue. *Vessels and Fields*, by Boston architect Wellington Reiter AIA, is largely a collection of Reiter's extraordinary pen-and-ink drawings. Our reviewer, Paul Stevenson Oles FAIA, noted that the book "is not about drawings — arresting as they may be — but about ideas. It is about contemporary urban culture, and a series of audacious proposals to promote a perceptual shift in the ways history and memory affect social connection."

Steve Oles was right — the book is about ideas. But it was the drawings that lured me most recently — drawings that depict both dreadful violence and marvelous invention. Drawings that remind us that buildings and cities are both ephemeral and enduring — they change, sometimes even disappear, then take new forms, absorbing the ruins of the past. Reiter's drawings in the context of recent events are both disturbing and comforting. Disturbing, because our own knowledge of destruction is so fresh. Comforting, because they remind us that healing and rebirth will come.

In 1990, Reiter constructed an installation at Boston's Cyclorama — that round brick structure in Boston's South End that was originally built to house Paul Dominique Philippoteaux's 400-foot-long painting of the Battle of Gettysburg. Philippoteaux's panorama was a form of 19th-century theater — visitors would stand in the center of the round room, surrounded by the battle scene, which merged with objects placed before the painting to create a three-dimensional, you-are-there experience. Reiter had visited the battlefield and was struck by its still-pervasive sense of sacredness, with the knowledge that nearly 6,000 lives had been lost in that place and tens of thousands forever changed. His installation recreated Philippoteaux's panoramic medium, from the vantage point of 150 years after the battle.

Vessels and Fields includes details of that installation that make Gettysburg relevant today. Philippoteaux created a you-are-there experience; Reiter created a we-were-there experience. His Guernica-like images remind us that we have seen horrific deaths and fearful casualties; we have faced uncertain futures; we have fought wars on the cusp of new technologies; we have seen ordinary lives become extraordinary. And we have emerged, stronger and better, to once again enjoy the pleasures and comforts of the everyday.

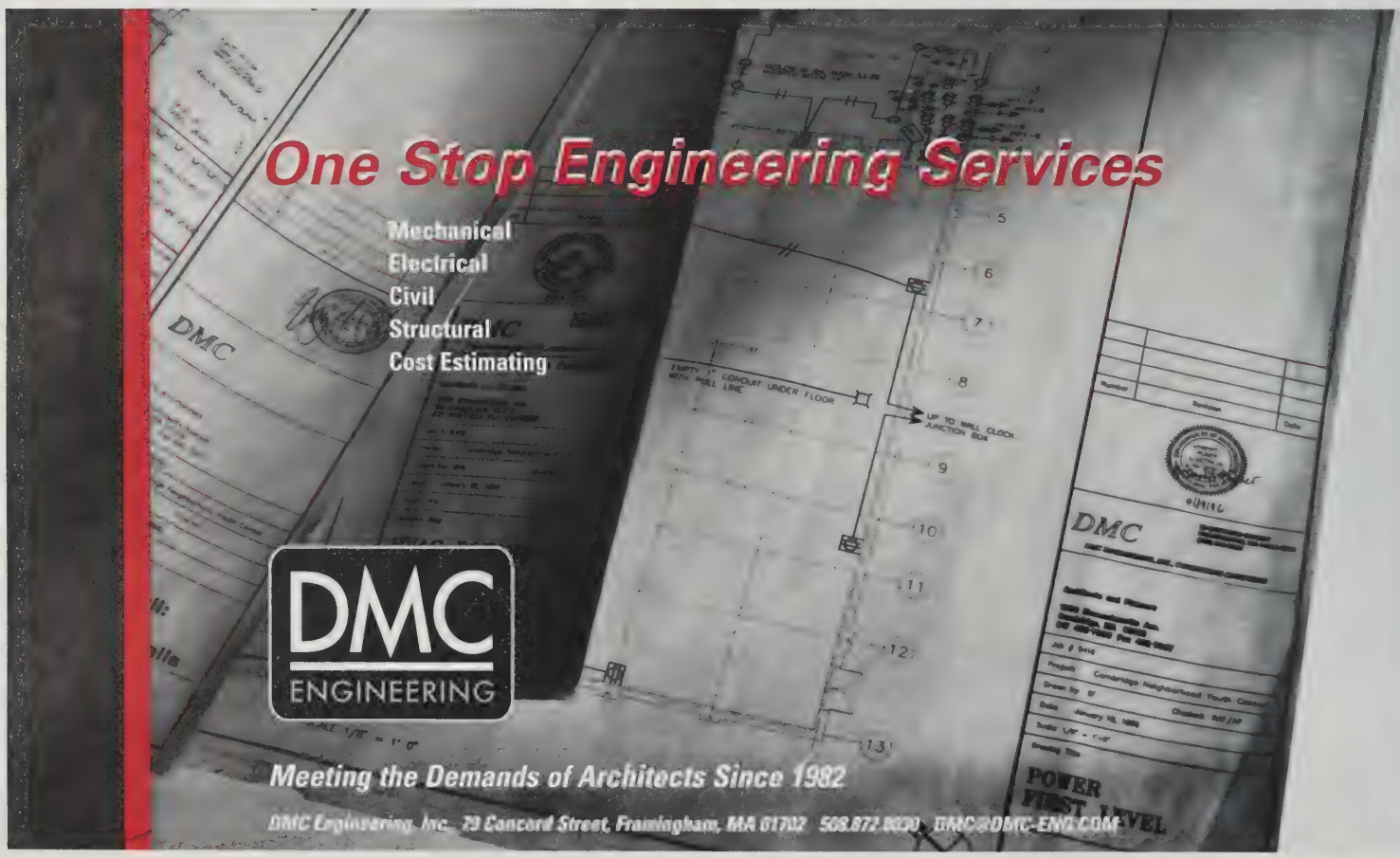
The world will soon turn to architects, artists, and planners for big ideas that make sense of the World Trade Center site. Small ideas might be the place to start.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor



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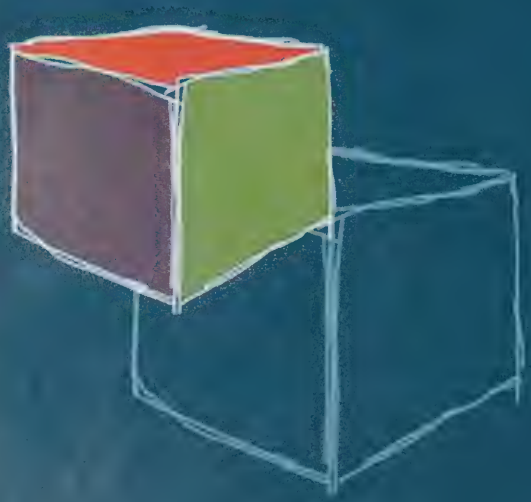
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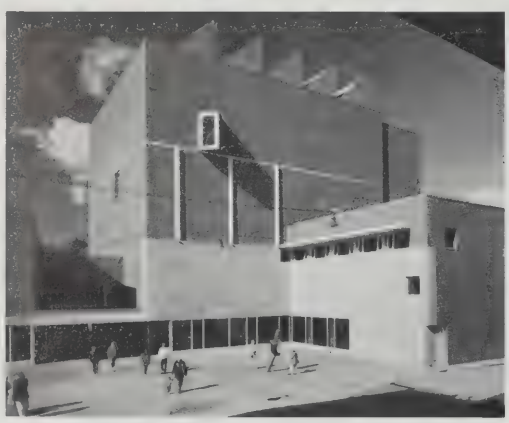
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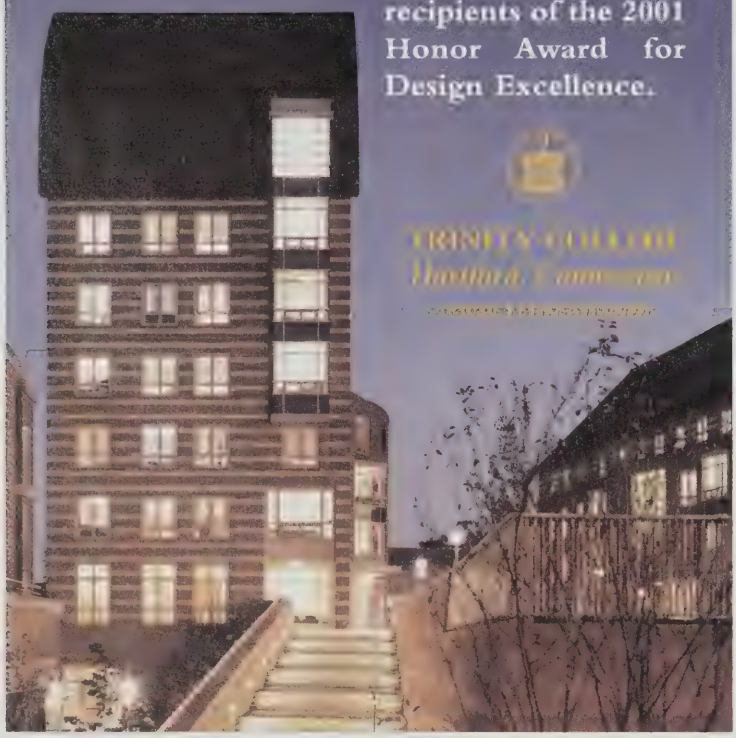
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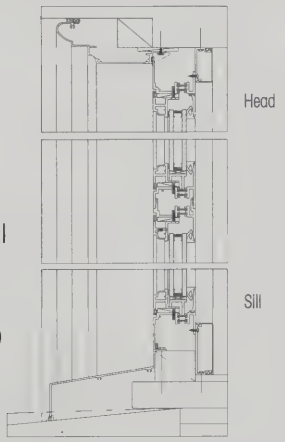
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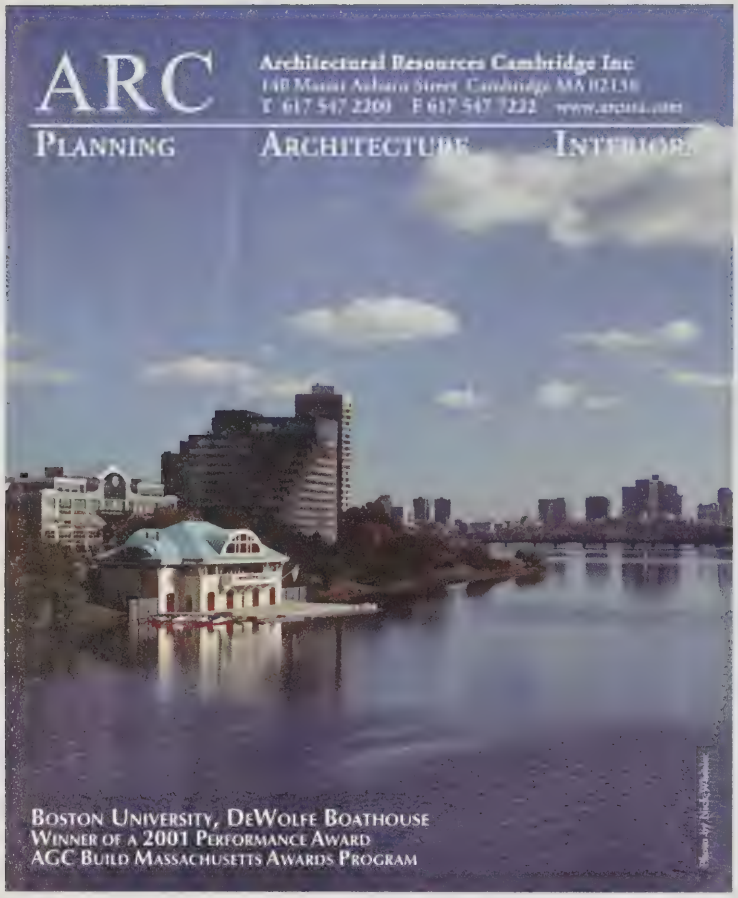
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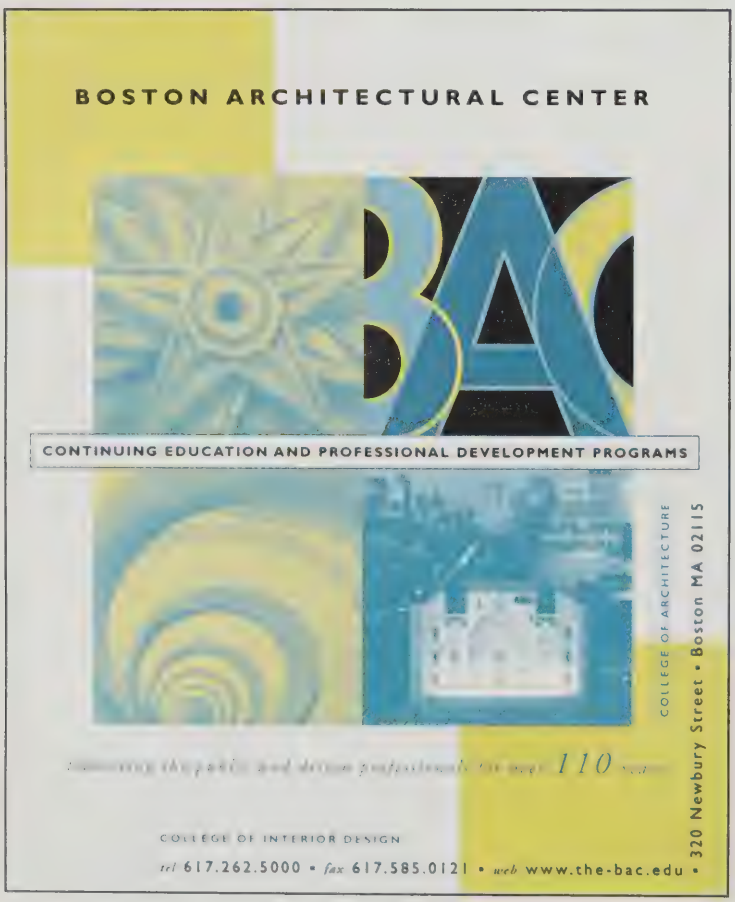
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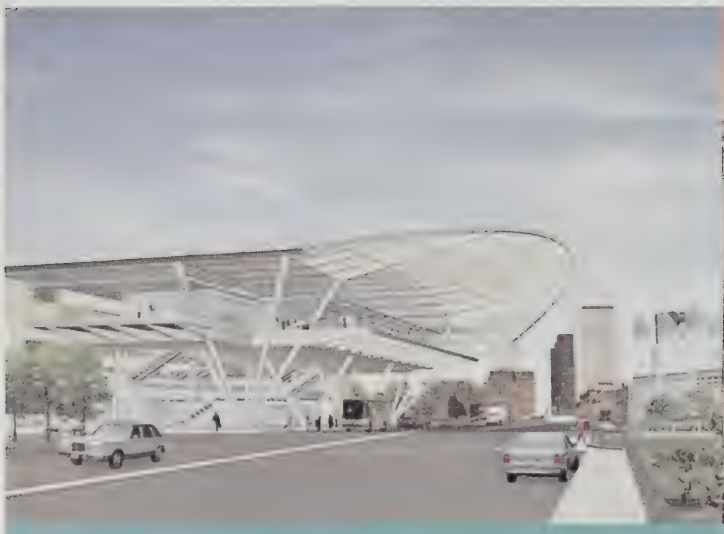
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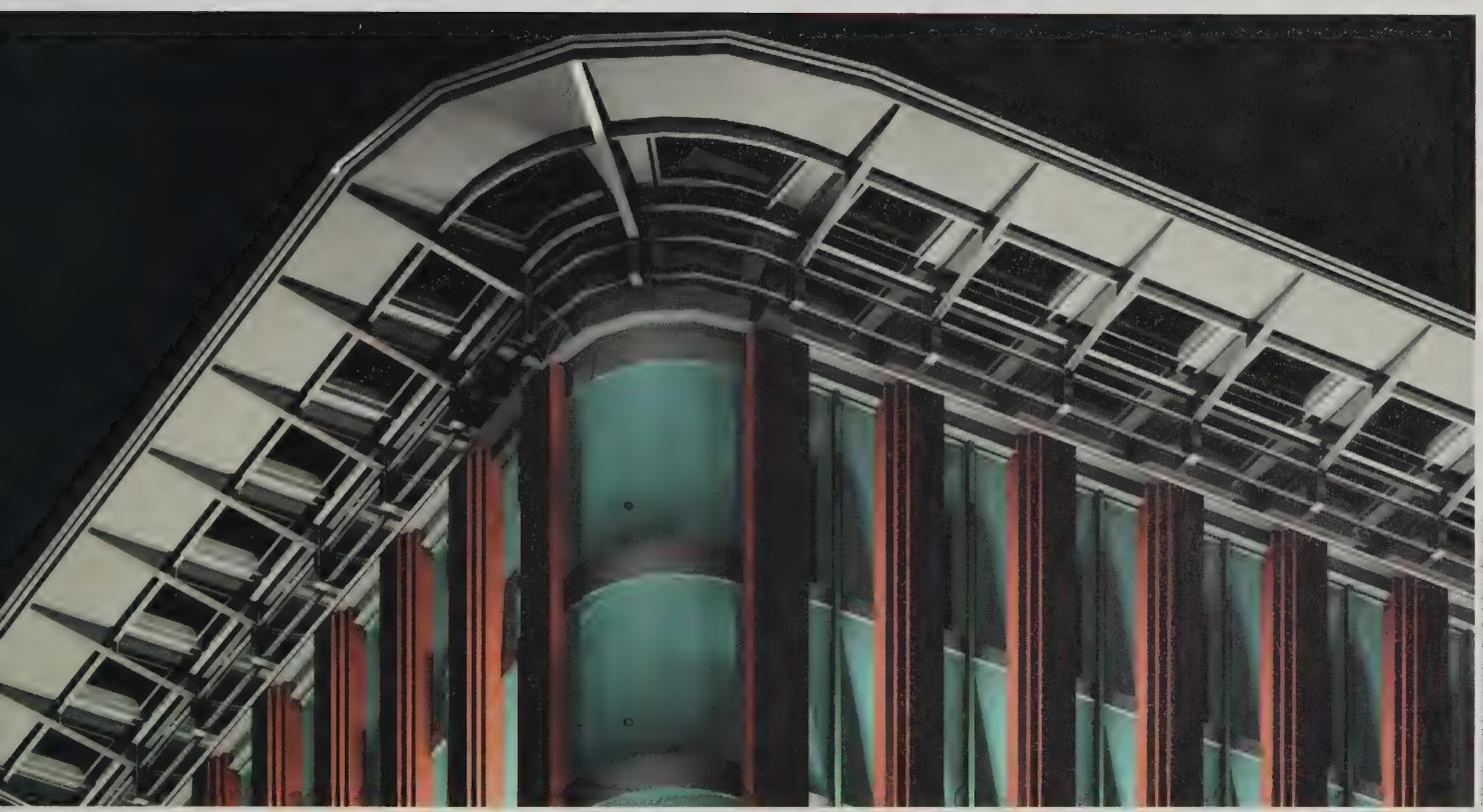
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Civic Civility: The Boston Civic Design Commission's First Ten Years

by James McCown



Rendering of Rose Kennedy Greenway, Parcel 7 by Martha Schwartz, Inc. and Wood + Zapata, Inc.

"The way to gain our approval is not to put a little brick skirt on a Modernist building. We're not the red-brick brigade."
Joan E. Goody FAIA

In February 1641, Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop wrote in his journal: "The church of Boston were [*sic*] necessitated to build a new meeting house, and a great difference arose about the place of situation … but after some debate it was referred to a committee, and was quietly determined." Almost three centuries later, this calm gentility on urban planning had given way to chaotic discord, as captured in a 1929 *New York Times* article describing the proposed Charles River Esplanade: "In no city is unification of public sentiment more difficult to obtain.... In none more numerous or more various plans offered.... Will the thing be done? Who can tell? This is Boston."

The Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC), conceived during the administration of Mayor Raymond Flynn in the mid-1980s but not actually impaneled until 1991, is heir to this tradition of a public architecture dialogue that is at once polite and prickly, conciliatory and combative. The 11-member panel has an advisory-only capacity to review and counsel the mayor and

"Ideally there will be a cumulation of insights that evolve into common law about urban design."

John de Monchaux LFRAIA



Above and preceding page, World Trade Center West Seaport District, Boston (under construction)

Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects

Early cost-cutting removed the proposed cornice, which was restored after BCDC review.

the Boston Redevelopment Authority on any new or rehabilitated structure over 100,000 square feet, or on projects deemed to be of special significance. Discussions with numerous local architects, urban planners, and developers give generally high marks to the commission for its 10 years, although some privately express concern that of the hundreds of proposals reviewed, only two have been rejected outright — Boston University's School of Management building on Commonwealth Avenue and its 10 Buick Street dormitory. The BCDC suggested that the management building was overscaled for the neighborhood and that the dorm blocked views and access to the Charles River. But because of the commission's advisory-only capacity, both buildings were allowed to proceed as designed.

That the commission has turned down only two designs "can be deceiving," comments Mark Schuster, professor of urban cultural policy at MIT, who has researched and written about design-review panels nationwide. "Most of the BCDC's work is done in subcommittees," he notes. "Designs really get banged up there and definitely get changed."

The chair of the commission is quick to point out that the BCDC's purpose is not design micromanagement: "Our mandate is to protect the public realm," says Joan E. Goody FAIA, principal of Goody, Clancy & Associates. "We care enormously about how a project relates to the street and what it does to the part of Boston that it's in." Goody says that, in terms of design, developers and architects often come before the board too eager to please: "The way to gain our approval is not to put a little brick skirt on a Modernist building. We're not the red-brick brigade."

A 525,000 square-foot office building for Pembroke Real Estate (a real estate arm of Fidelity Investments), now under construction near the World Trade Center, is an example of substantive impact the commission has had on a specific design. According to Ted Szostkowski AIA, principal of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, early cost-cutting removed a cornice from the building. "The BCDC felt that without it, there would be a confused reading of the front and the back of the building," he recalls. "So they told us to put it back, and we did." This and other changes recommended

by the commission, he says, added several million dollars to the project's cost.

MIT's Schuster believes the Pembroke project is an example of another phenomenon. "It's often clear," he notes, "that architects want the BCDC to align with them to nudge clients to improve design." And a strong nudge at that — Schuster's 1995 study of architects' opinions about the BCDC indicated that "many expressed a desire that the panel be less accommodating and more forceful. They argued for a bit more passion among its members."

John de Monchaux LFRAIA, a professor of architecture and planning at MIT who was the commission's first chair, believes that over time the BCDC's body of decisions will be valuable: "Ideally there will be a cumulation of insights that evolve into common law about urban design," he says. William L. Rawn FAIA, a commission member from the beginning, who trained as both an architect and a lawyer, concurs: "I think there is a clear pattern to the body of decisions we've made so far."

More than 95 percent of all US cities with populations greater than 100,000 have some form of design review in place. By the mid-1980s, the rise in power of community groups led the Boston Society of Architects and the BRA to seek "a single forum for design issues," notes David Dixon FAIA, a principal at Goody, Clancy, who helped draft the zoning amendment that established the BCDC. But today, Joan Goody points out, community groups can not only affect design but also promote their own parochial interests at the expense of the larger city — an occurrence for which the BCDC must be on the lookout. "We had an instance in which residents were being offered access to much-desired parking by a developer who wanted to build an above-ground garage," she recalls. "Yes, the neighborhood can defend itself, but in doing so, it can countenance things not good for the city as a whole. We have to look beyond the neighborhood."

Some prominent architects and urban planners are opposed to design review boards on principle.

Brenda Case Scheer AIA, a former director of urban design for the Boston Public Facilities Department and now a professor at the University of Cincinnati, wrote in a 1995 article for *Studies in the History of Art*: "Many good projects by sensitive architects simply do not meet the conservative expectations of the public. Design review is often directed at … regularizing the design, eliminating the personal expressiveness, making the building a 'good neighbor,' bleaching out the original color and inventiveness." Others believe review boards are inextricably controlled by politicians. A local architecture professor, who requested anonymity, says: "No mayor wants to say, 'I cede to these pointy-headed professionals.' As it was with Roman Emperors, leaving one's legacy through buildings is a unique executive perk."

Highlighting the contradictory nature of a bodies like the BCDC, John J. Costonis, a widely regarded expert on aesthetics and the law, writes in his book *Icons and Aliens*: "Aesthetics initiatives shape our dealings with our property, with each other and with the state.... They initiate thoughtful public policies and they spout jingoistic nonsense. They package power, sometimes used to enhance community welfare and sometimes to undermine it." And, he notes, there are basic issues of free expression to be dealt with: " 'Why,' a latter-day Louis Sullivan might understandably complain, 'should my work be turned down or tinkered with by governmental censors while the work of poets, painters, and playwrights that is even more 'offensive' to the public escapes scot-free under the First Amendment?'"

Such is the anomaly of architecture among the arts — it invites collective decision-making. Members of the urban elite who wouldn't dream of censoring the content of a local museum exhibition lose no sleep over demanding a granite entablature instead of a glass curtain wall for that new building in the Back Bay or the South End.

And yet, whither the bold architectural gesture? Ideally, the BCDC is not just protector but also muse, a champion of singular, bracing design where appropriate. It has succeeded, to the extent legally allowed, in the former role. It now might want to redouble its efforts in the latter, bearing in mind a comment from Louis Sullivan (a Bostonian by birth): "All mechanical theories of art are vanity … the best rules are but as flowers planted over the graves of prodigious impulses. … It is within the souls of individuals that art reaches culminations." ■■■

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The Never-Ending Story

by Gretchen Schneider,
Assoc. AIA

"Whatever you do, don't make it like City Hall Plaza."

(overheard at the public presentation for the Central Artery Open Space Master Plan, May 2001)





New arcade, City Hall Plaza, Boston
Chan Krieger & Associates

2001 is the year we finally did something with City Hall Plaza: We constructed an arcade. Perhaps you've seen it, or read newspaper accounts of its $2.7-million construction.

Each generation puts its mark on the city, and the arcade is ours. The end of the year gives us opportunity to pause, reflect, and ask: "OK. But what did we do?"

First, the arcade.

The arcade's strongest visual statement is a series of 13 slender, flagpole-like columns that line the Cambridge Street sidewalk, carrying banners and a sophisticated lighting display. Just above our heads, a canopy of wood slats provides shade (sort of); more importantly, like tree branches, it shapes a smaller-scale space that our bodies can relate to. (Everything else on the plaza emphasizes vastness and is open clear to the sky.) At the ground, three platforms extend beyond the original granite steps, lined with high-backed wood benches. Individual granite-and-wood seats dot the arcade's length.

The arcade is only the first step of a three-phase plan to "define the edge" of the plaza's Cambridge Street border. The arcade brings seating, power, and lighting to the northern reaches of the plaza, which in turn support farmers markets, arts fairs, and other events. The architectural language of the arcade will continue through a new headhouse for the Government Center subway station, the second phase of the project.

City Hall Plaza

Is the arcade too small, too tentative, too fussy? Sure — but that's because of its context. It sits on the plaza like a painting with only foreground and background, or Goldilocks without Mama Bear. There is no middle scale on the plaza, so this delicate addition seems even more fragile. It will take much more than one arcade to "humanize" an 8.8-acre expanse of brick. This is only a beginning.

The little arcade's been given large responsibilities. It serves as a visual anchor, defining the edge of a vast open space that until now dissolved in every direction. It acts as both wall and screen, segregating sidewalk traffic while allowing a visual connection between the street and the plaza. Those high-backed benches facing the street create pockets of space in which to pause or people-watch. You might ask, "Yeah, but what exactly do you watch there? Cambridge Street traffic? Kinko's customers?" Good questions. Maybe it's helpful to know that an earlier version of this arcade was proposed along the "Walk to the Sea" (the well-traveled path between the Government Center T station and Quincy Market) where its delicate scale worked well, but where the Sears Crescent building already provides an effective edge.

The arcade respects its context without mimicking it, demonstrating a new generation of Modernism. This is not the monumental, heroic, Big-Government-but-do-not-touch architecture of the '60s, but something smaller that acknowledges the individual. *Father Knows Best* has given way to *Friends*.

Next, the Plaza.

The arcade, however, is only one small piece of a comprehensive undertaking for the plaza. Originally designed by Gerhard Kallmann FAIA and Michael McKinnell FAIA, the plaza has been under-loved and under-used since its completion in 1968; considered too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter, it became an always-empty, long-neglected, uncomfortable sea of bricks. In short, it was not what it should be. After years of public seminars, focus teams, and an open "ideas competition," Boston Mayor Thomas Menino formed the Trust for City Hall Plaza in 1995, a public/private partnership charged with planning its revitalization.

Inspired by the great popular and economic success of the park at Post Office Square, the Trust for City Hall Plaza was charged with identifying similar strategies for the plaza. At Post Office Square, a new underground garage helps to pay for park maintenance; the Trust was asked to be similarly creative.

The Trust hired Chan Krieger & Associates, who worked with landscape architect George Hargreaves to develop a comprehensive proposal that was released in 1998. Most controversial were its recommendations to re-introduce Hanover Street (thus shrinking the actual size of the plaza by restoring one of the streets that had been erased with the original construction of the plaza) and to add a hotel between this new street and the John F. Kennedy Federal Office Building. Following the Post Office Square model, hotel revenues were to pay for the plaza's maintenance. However, the proposal was brought to a screeching halt by an alliance of those outraged at the idea of private developers exploiting public space and those raising security concerns in the wake of Oklahoma City about potential vulnerability of the federal building. It seemed as if the entire redevelopment process had suddenly unraveled.

Why? Some say the Trust for City Hall Plaza misjudged publicity and politics. Others contend that we have not yet come to terms with what it means to have public/private partnerships. Urban designer David Dixon FAIA believes that the process itself was derailed. "Everyone got lost in ideological issues," he notes, "which meant that it became harder to focus on design."

"How long does it take to introduce change?" asks Catherine Donaher, former head of the Trust for City Hall Plaza and now a member of its board. "For important things to happen, one has to take bold steps." At the same time, she points out, one has to begin with deliberation, building momentum, involving communities, bringing along stakeholders; ultimately it is a slow process of "percolation." Remember, the construction of Back Bay took 40 years. Ever so slowly, change will come to the plaza. Thus we see the arcade.

By the end of 2001, where were we? Percolating.

Rendering, 1998 masterplan proposal, showing reintroduction of Hanover Street and new hotel.

Courtesy, Hargreaves Associates; rendering by Michael Bier



Who cares?

Tragically, since September 11, we've seen the plaza perform as its designers intended. City Hall Plaza was the *right* place to come together. Gatherings to celebrate lives, to defy, to mourn; interfaith prayer services; rallies for peace and for action happened here. The plaza is the place to express our community and debate our city's role in this world.

In more festive times, the plaza becomes the venue for all kinds of gatherings — concerts, sports rallies, Winter Wonderland, the Scooper Bowl — events that could not take place anywhere else downtown. And a good city needs these things downtown. The Scooper Bowl in Post Office Square? Unlikely.

Yet, as Catherine Donaher explains, the plaza does not lend additional dignity to these special gatherings, nor does it offer creature comforts. Likewise, it fails to enhance the experience of the 45,000 people who cross it every day. This is the most prominent civic space in our region; it plays a profound role. We need a well-designed place worthy of that role. We have the place, but not the design.

What is wrong with City Hall Plaza? Though there is a great "there, there," it feels as though there's nothing. As you walk through, the space falls away; it doesn't contain. The plaza often seems more like an extra-wide hallway then a place.

Architectural historians are fond of saying the plaza was modeled on the Campo in Siena, but perhaps the Mall in Washington, DC, would have served as a better precedent. After all, we are not a pedestrian, medieval Italian town, but a car-based city of the 21st century. The Mall is lined with government buildings and streets; paths and play areas are carefully defined.

The overall landscape has a shape and a vision, an identity one can recognize and thus defend. From memory, can you draw the shape of City Hall Plaza? Probably not — all that comes to mind is the brick, maybe the zig-zag steps. We have the pieces, but they don't yet make a whole. We are in need of a vision.

Back to the future.

David Dixon suggests that today's City Hall Plaza is "an artifact born of a certain set of conditions [that are] now almost irrelevant." Yet it is impossible to appreciate where we are without understanding how far we've come.

By the end of 2001, where were we? Sitting on the heels of a smashing success, a success beyond our wildest imaginations.

But in the mid-20th century, Boston's economy had been depressed for decades; manufacturing had long-ago moved south, and military contracts were gone. Under Mayor James Michael Curley, years of political corruption included mismanagement, neglect, and little maintenance of urban infrastructure. In *Building a New Boston*, historian Thomas O'Connor cites a chorus of voices reminding us of the city's sorry state. *The Back Bay Ledger* noted, "Commonwealth Avenue is a beautiful street in many ways, but it looks like a deserted village in many block lengths, where house after house has been boarded up, and the one-time residents gone."

In 1944, architect William Roger Greeley lamented that Boston had not shared with London the "advantage" of widespread destruction by aerial bombardment, clearing out the old city to make way for a new one. *The Boston Globe* went so far as to dub its home "a hopeless backwater, a tumbled-down has-been among cities." *US News and World Report* said Boston was "dying on the vine."

As Mayor John Collins later recalled, "[Boston's] blight and decay was overwhelming. Seventy percent of the housing stock was substandard. The waterfront was literally falling into the Atlantic Ocean. Scollay Square had half a dozen burlesque houses, honky-tonk places, and tattoo parlors. It was just miserable ... Nothing new had been built for years."

The 1950 plan for Boston earmarked 2,700 acres for slum clearance. By comparison, the Big Dig will open up only 27 acres over the new underground roadway. But something had to be done, and it was, and we know in hindsight the gross mistakes in the destruction of the West End. We recognized the tragedy of dislocating residents almost immediately. (However, not until the Bicentennial would our culture again regain confidence in small streets, old buildings, and traditional cities.) The young urban-renewal hotshot, Edward Logue, was brought from New Haven to help straighten out the mess and set Boston on a positive path.

Logue approached Government Center — the proposed core of federal, state, and municipal buildings — as an opportunity to do things better than the West End. Thus Scollay Square — a run-down, raffish, redlight district — was selected as the site rather than a residential district. And as O'Connor writes, Logue deemed this project the city's "highest priority," not only for new office space and local construction jobs, but most importantly for the "catalytic effect" it would have upon Boston's self-image. I.M Pei's masterplan for Government Center and Kallmann and McKinnell's competition-winning proposal for a new city hall and plaza offered a chance to create a new identity for Boston, an architectural statement worthy of an international, world-class city. As Tom Witkowski wrote in these pages last year ["Year in Review, 2000"], City Hall was supposed to do for Boston what Gehry's Guggenheim is doing for Bilbao.

And it did. Now, over three decades later, it is time to make the plaza a place we want to be, because now the city is a place we want to be.

So, where are we?

Despite what our leaders say, it's not time to throw out City Hall and its plaza, nor is it time to sell it and move on. Our predecessors made that very mistake — of declaring entire sections of the city "obsolete," demolishing them to make room for new, better ideas. Abandoning City Hall might make for good campaign sound bites, but if we actually followed through, we would repeat the actions of those who cleared Scollay Square. Cities aren't obsolete. Cities evolve.

Now is a phenomenal moment in Boston's evolution. Though they are owned, developed, and maintained by a myriad of often-competing public and private interests, the public spaces of City Hall Plaza, the Seaport District, and the new surface of the Central Artery, sit side by side. As we — visitors and residents of the city of Boston — move through the downtown, we experience these places as a continuous sweep, regardless of political and property boundaries. This is indeed a unique time, as we have the opportunity to consider these projects together and develop a grand vision for what our city's open space could be.

We're in no danger of repeating the mistakes of the West End. As we sit at the opposite swing of the pendulum, the danger instead is inaction. Ongoing debate over the plaza is perhaps our greatest testament to its success: we care enough to argue. Yet, as a city, we can't confuse debate with accomplishment, or with failure. Nor should we mistake this one construction for a conclusion.

The arcade is a first tentative step, a small beginning. With a resounding voice, we need to tell our leaders that it's time to take more. For nearly 400 years, Boston has been our nation's foremost urban design experiment. No other American city has voluntarily transformed itself as much. City Hall Plaza deserves to be the shining center of that legacy. ■■■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

Castles in the Air:

Reflections on a decade of BSA Unbuilt Architecture Awards

by Robert A. Brown IIDA, AIA

For the last ten years, the Boston Society of Architects has annually sponsored an unusual awards program that offers something even more enticing than the usual temptations of fame, fortune, new clients, and faculty appointments — the simple satisfaction of launching a good idea.

With minimal restrictions or guidelines, the BSA Unbuilt Architecture Awards program has invited the world's best designers to send in their ideas for architecture that remains unbuilt, be it theoretical or practical, commissioned by a client, or developed as a personal exercise. They have responded with more than 800 entries, representing a dozen countries. Collectively, these submissions — each presented on a single 30-by-30-inch entry board — have been reviewed by 67 jurors who honored 72 projects with awards after hours of reflective discourse — and only two arguments.

The Unbuilt Architecture Awards began as a notion to showcase the various investigations that architects were undertaking when they were dreaming, sketching, and contemplating the theoretical realm of architecture. The result has been quite startling, revealing a design profession in a great eclectic search for form, detail, content, and emotion. There have been projects dealing with housing, an urban mausoleum, bioclimatic buildings, bridges, emotionally charged memorials, massive urban developments, and some problems that the jury could never really identify. Many of these projects went beyond design and developed their own personalities: "Winnie," "Big Foot," "Flow," "Melvilla," "The Rock," "Centopath," and the daunting "Dam Yankees." Out of this diverse collection, the winners ranged from the expected projects from students to proposals from tenure-track professors, well-known architects, and even a handful of professionals from related disciplines.

Having served as chair of these ten juries, I saw some incredible ideas with amazing delineation, stunning graphics, and soulful promises. I also participated as each jury spent hours comparing and contrasting this wide range of work before finally selecting the best, the brightest, and oftentimes the bravest submissions for recognition and awards.

From the hundreds of submissions, a number of trends have emerged. They are a bit unconventional but give us an insight into the thinking and emotion of our imaginative colleagues.

Architecture that Moves

Many projects explored transformation and movement to create a dynamic new environment in response to our ever-changing culture. "Flows," by David Seely of Boston, was one of many entries that took on the automobile/transportation challenge. In this submission exploring new roles for the old idea of the dining car, the diner moves from place to place bringing food and joy to the urban and suburban realm.

Poetic Architecture

The poetry of architecture came through with heartfelt emotion in Julian Bonder's "On Memory: Reconstructing AMIA (Association Mutual Israelita Argentina)." This memorial, one of ten awarded in the past ten years, grapples with how we deal with the horrific loss of war. Since Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial, we have been transfixed by the power of contemporary design to heal our wounds. We need to remember the fallen heroes and we naturally seek "a place" to reflect on their past and contemplate our future.

Technology as a Solution

Technology is constantly a part of our thoughts as it controls our destiny and shapes our future. "The Electromagnetic Garden," by John P. Maruszczak, of Fort Worth, Texas, suggested a landscape literally charged with dynamic excitement, while "Civilizing Technologies: A Solar Wall for the Department of Energy" by Stephen Luoni of Gainesville, Florida, transformed mechanical solar panels into a beautiful golden necklace that softens a Brutalist structure for the Department of Energy.

Illustration as Art

Architecture is problem-solving and form-giving, but it is also an art. Two houses submitted by Brian Healy AIA of Boston and three projects by the late Douglas Darden of Denver, Colorado, captivated juries with their thinking and the power of their illustration. Darden's "Oxygen House," "Hostel, A Sliding Scale for Habitation," and "Melvilla and Underlined Reading" revealed an astonishing talent whose work shook the 1995 jury. Many submissions similarly expressed powerful concepts with equally rich architectural delineation.

Fantastic Architecture

Fantastic architecture was ever present. Unbuildable and far-reaching, these submissions stretch our imagination and challenge our perspective of the world. What could be more fantastic than a stadium floating from city to city, celebrating sport? "Big Foot: A Football Stadium for LA" by Roisin Heneghan and Shia-Fu Peng of New York explored alternative ways of sharing in the spectacle of sport, forcing us to think beyond the practical while toying with the possible.

Architecture of Craft

Ours is a profession of craft and building — the study of materials and assembly, the containment of space, and the creation of place. Two separate years brought us houses by Stephen Atkinson, formerly of Somerville, Massachusetts, and now of New York City. "The Grafton House and Studio" and "The Zachary House" were quiet, elegant, and extraordinarily restrained explorations of living. They were inventive in detail and material selection that made one think of new ways to create new as well as familiar forms.

Building as Machine

Brian Andrews, submitting alone or with Jude LeBlanc, was recognized six times over ten years for buildings that were rich with meaning, tectonic in design and detail, and exquisitely illustrated. "Two Scupper Houses or The Shotgun and the Dogtrot Revisited," "West Bank Industrial Workers Club," "Disaster Relief Emergency Housing," "Gulf Gate Housing," "Mall Housing," and "Baton Rouge Cimetière" represented the epitome of buildings-as-machines for living, dying, and recreation.

These are a few of the brightest stars in a rich constellation of entries. They immediately reflect our profession as we collectively search for new ideas, experiment with new forms, and explore differing technologies.

Unbuilt architecture is a form of conversation between one's mind and one's canvas. It is the research-and-development arm of our profession, where inventors work to find new and interesting solutions. Some of these conversations remain very private and drift from our sight, while others become strong public voices.

To that end, it has been gratifying to see many of these voices go on to build their dreams and influence our profession. Thompson and Rose, Jeff Blackledge, Randy Brown, and Office dA are only a few examples. Their inventive ideas are now tangible and have received further recognition as buildings that contribute to the language of built form.

The essence of this or any awards program is to nurture, to reinforce, and to expose emerging talent to the larger world. The Unbuilt Architecture Awards remains a unique program within the creative landscape for explorers of design. Its success has been its ability to find significant ideas and introduce them to a world interested in new design discourse. Some of the participants have since found fame, fortune, new clients, and faculty appointments. But they have all found the simple satisfaction of revisiting the creative aspects of the profession — and of launching a good idea. ■■■

Robert A. Brown IIDA, AIA, is a principal of CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares Inc. in Boston and is the president of the Boston Society of Architects. He founded the Unbuilt Architecture Awards program ten years ago.

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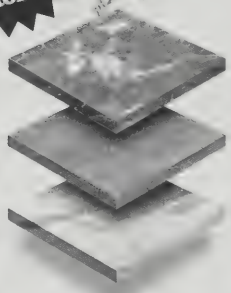
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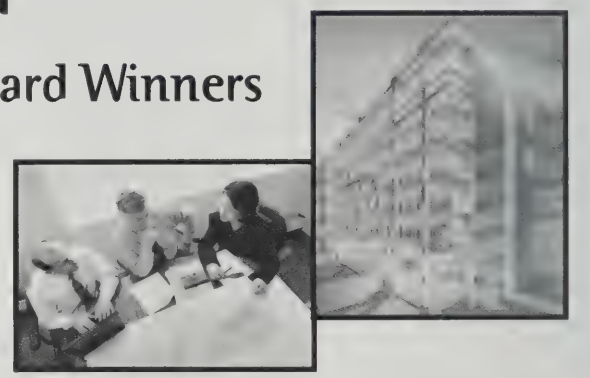
1977 ***Faneuil Hall Marketplace***
Benjamin Thompson and Associates

1985 ***Church Court Condominiums***
Graham Gund Architects

1987 ***Perry Dean Rogers & Partners***
Wellesley College Science Center

1990 ***Harvard Business School - Shad Hall***
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood

1993 ***MIT Rotch Library***
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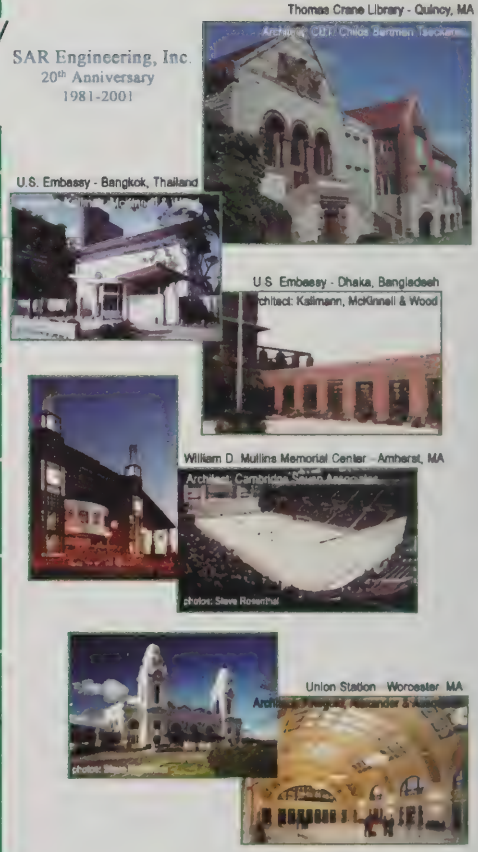
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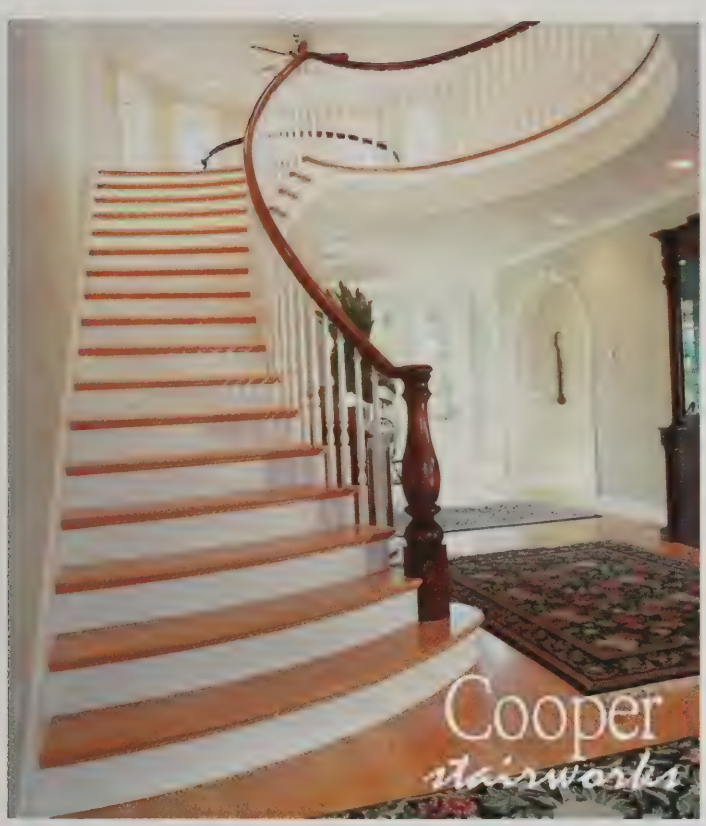
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The 2001 Harleston Parker Medal

The Harleston Parker Medal was established in 1921 by J. Harleston Parker to recognize "the most beautiful piece of architecture, building, monument, or structure within the limits of the City of Boston or of the Metropolitan Parks District."

Jury:

Ted Szostkowski AIA, Chair
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood, Architects, Inc.
Boston

Rebecca Barnes FAIA
Boston Redevelopment Authority

Bob Cunkelman PE
Department of Facilities, MIT
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Deborah Fennick AIA
TAMS Consultants Inc.
Boston

Kimo Griggs AIA
JKSG Architects, Inc.; Kimo Incorporated
Somerville, Massachusetts

Tom Keane
Boston

Robert Miklos FAIA
Ann Beha Associates, Inc.
Boston

Kathleen Thurston-Lighty
Thurston-Lighty Ltd.
Pembroke, Massachusetts

John Tittmann AIA
Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Inc.
Boston

Nick Wheeler
Wheeler Photographics
Weston, Massachusetts

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments may be found at www.architects.org/awards.html

Boston Public Library Restoration and Renovation: The McKim Building Boston

Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott

Photo: Richard Cheek



Architect:
Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott
Boston
www.sbra.com

Contractor Phase I:
Peabody Construction Co.

Contractor Phase II:
Lee Kennedy Company

Structural
Foley & Buhl

Roofing and waterproofing:
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger

Plumbing and fire protection:
R.W. Sullivan, Inc.
HVAC and electrical:
TMP Consulting Engineers

Custom and historic lighting:
Fisher Marantz Renfrow Stone, Inc.
Kugler Tillotson Associates
Ripman Lighting

Fine art conservation:
Strauss Center for Conservation, Harvard University

Historic materials
Building Conservation Association
Building and Monument Conservation
Daedalus Conservators
Preservation Technology Associates
Robert Mussey Associates
Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

Artisans, conservators, fabricators:
Gregg Lefevre Studio
John Canning & Co., Ltd.
Strauss Center for Conservation, Harvard University
Bertone & Sons Company
David Autio, Plasterer
Moliterno Stone
Sasso Stone, Inc.
Bergen Art Metal
Custom Metalcraft

Photos:
Richard Cheek
Peter Vanderwarker

Information in the electronic age is much like dinner ordered through one of those grocery delivery services: there's no temptation to stray from chicken and vegetables and splurge on steak and potatoes. A writer looking up a word in an electronic dictionary will not be distracted by the entries on either side. A researcher doing an online investigation of clipper ships need not contend with galleons or submarines.

But there was a time — a cigar-smoking, brandy-sipping time — when information was served with great caloric dollops of cultural context. Nowhere were the servings more plentiful than at the Boston Public Library. Bostonians have always had to survive by their wits, and even in the 19th century, the city's civic leaders recognized that continued prosperity depended upon public access to education and knowledge. The doors of architect Charles McKim's "palace for the people" first opened in February 1895. Now, a century later, the imposing bronze Dartmouth Street doors are open once again, and the entry hall and grand stair are newly cleaned and restored to their original condition. The grime and gloom are gone, replaced by the golden vanilla tones of a marble stair hall that glows with the sinful richness of a cup of eggnog.

The restoration of the McKim building focuses attention on the enduring vision of the library's founders. A project of this scale is far more complex than it may seem; removing antique dirt is only part of the process. Adapting the building to new codes, providing access for the handicapped, updating the mechanical and electrical systems, and accommodating new library functions while maintaining the integrity of the original building is a daunting and sometimes frustrating task. Some of the staff members of Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott have devoted more years to the library than did Charles McKim himself. SBRA led an extraordinary team of consultants,

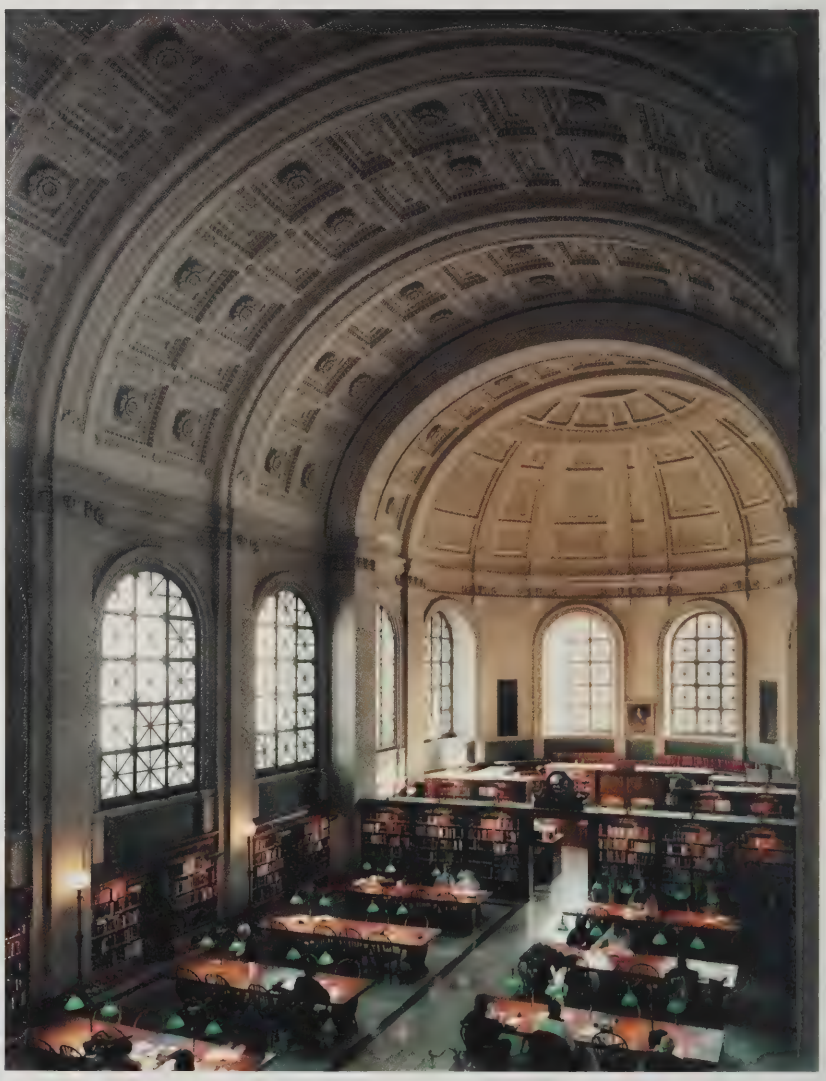
builders, artisans, and conservators who restored and sometimes replicated the original work, including tilework, stenciling, and features such as an inlaid brass zodiac and the great murals by Puvis de Chavannes.

Today, a "peoples' palace" would more likely connote a grim office building for totalitarian bureaucrats — such is our view of civic structures. Public buildings come under close scrutiny these days, and the wasteful and inessential are often rightfully exorcised. But McKim's library is a landmark from an era that endowed the public realm with great dignity, and SBRA's achievement is the restoration of that dignity. Buildings that succeed in reminding us of our common civic ideals are never wasteful, and their beauty is never inessential.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA







BSA Honor Awards for Design Excellence

Jury

Bill Clegg IIDA
Schmidgall Associates, Simsbury, Connecticut
President, International Interior Design Association/New England

Thom Peters FAIA
LS3P Associates, Charleston, South Carolina
President-elect, American Institute of Architects

Hunter Ott AIA
HK Architects, Norwich, Vermont
President, AIA New England

Jury comments

While we were surprised at how little evidence there was of sustainable design sensibilities in this year's body of work, we were impressed overall by the extremely high level of competence that pervaded virtually all of the projects that we had the opportunity to examine. There is no question that the level of work being done by Massachusetts architects is frequently at the highest national level and, indeed, this reality made it extremely difficult for us to narrow our choices to the 21 projects we have elected to honor this year. We are aware that this is an unusually high percentage of submissions to honor with design awards but, in fact, the body of work we reviewed clearly merited this level of attention and recognition.

Editor's note:
The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and the jury's recommendations on organizations of submissions, may be found at www.architects.org/awards.html

35 Ann Beha Architects
Hensel Hall, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

36 Ann Beha Architects
with SRG Architects (phase one) and SERA Architects PC (phase two)
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon

36 Butzer Design Partnership with Sasaki Associates
Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

37 Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc.
Searles Science Building, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine

38 CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares Inc.
200 Newbury Street, Boston

38 Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc.
Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

39 Jung|Brannen Associates, Inc.
Praecis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Waltham, Massachusetts

40 NBBJ
Reebok World Headquarters, Canton, Massachusetts

41 Perry Dean Rogers | Partners Architects
Milton Hershey School Town Center, Hershey, Pennsylvania

41 William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Columbus Fire Station No. 6, Columbus, Indiana

42 William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Glavin Family Chapel, Babson College, Wellesley, Massachusetts

42 William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
West Campus Residence Halls, Northeastern University, Boston

43 William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Symphony Lake Amphitheater, Cary, North Carolina

44 William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Summit Residences and Court, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

45 Sasaki Associates, Inc.
Gladys Sakowich Campus Center, Merrimack College, N. Andover, Massachusetts

46 TAMS Consultants, Inc.
Martha's Vineyard Airport Terminal, Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

47 Thompson and Rose Architects (now Charles Rose Architects)
Weinstein Residence, New York City

47 Thompson and Rose Architects (now Charles Rose Architects)
Vineyard Sound Residence, Aquinnah, Massachusetts

48 Thompson and Rose Architects (now Charles Rose Architects)
Camp Paint Rock, Hyattville, Wyoming

49 Thompson and Rose Architects (now Charles Rose Architects)
Polly Hill Arboretum Visitors Center, Chilmark, Massachusetts

Honorable Mention

49 Keith G. Moskow Architects, Inc.
The Carroll School Student Stand, Lincoln, Massachusetts

Honor Award:
Hensel Hall
Franklin and Marshall College
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Architect:
Ann Beha Architects
Boston
www.annbeha.com

Project team:
Ann M. Beha FAIA; Peter C. Sugar AIA; Richard Panciera AIA; John Paul Dunn AIA; Will Truslow; Chris Raber

Contractor:
Warfel Construction Company

Consultants:
Robert Silman & Associates, PC (structural); Altieri Sebor Wieber Consulting Engineers (MEP and fire protection); [illegible] Edson and Associates, LLP (landscape); Andrew Chartwell & Co[illegible] Charles Cosler Theater Design (theater); Kirkegaard Associates (acoustical)

[illegible]

The design recast an auditorium as a gateway for the campus and a resource for its community. The renovation created a new interior with a tall backstage, a stage sized for a full orchestra and chorus, and seating for 500 in an intimate setting capable of delivering a large concert hall sound.





Honor Award
Oklahoma City National Memorial
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Client
Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation

Designer
Butzer Design Partnership
Hans and Torrey Butzer with Tom Hunt

Architect of Record
Sasaki Associates
Watertown, Massachusetts









Honor Award
Portland Art Museum
Portland, Oregon

Architect
Ann Beha Architects
Boston
www.annbeha.com

Associate Architect
(phase one)
SRG Architects
Portland, Oregon

Associate Architect
(phase two)
SERA Architects PC
Portland, Oregon

Project team
Ann M. Beha FAIA, Partner
Princeton, MA; Tim Hinkley
AIA, Jean Paul Bourdier, Peter
Leigh AIA, Will Truslow,
Chris Baker, Scott Phipps

Consultant
Hoffman Construction
Company

Consultant
KPFF Consulting Engineers
(Structural and Civil); Atelier
Ten (Mechanical, Electrical,
Lighting and Sustainable Design);
Landscape/Architecture
(Landscape); Tomio Kimoto
(Art Conservation Center Color
Theory); Design Dimension
(Graphics for Wayfinding)

The design is centered on three historic brick buildings, incorporating an 80,000-square-foot addition and adding 4 acres of gallery and outdoor space. The $50 million project makes the museum one of the 25 largest in the country. It has received a 1999 Citation of Merit from the Boston Society of Architects.







Honor Award
Searles Science Building
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Architect
Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.c7a.com



Honor Award:
Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center
Worcester, Massachusetts

Client:
Worcester Redevelopment Authority
Worcester, Massachusetts

Architect:
Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc.
Boston
www.faainc.com

Associate Architect:
Harry Weese Associates

Project team
James Alexander FAIA (principal in charge); Sherman Morss, Jr., AIA (preservation architect); Steven McFadden AIA, Ronald Robert[illegible] AIA, Jeffrey Gangi AIA

Contractor:
JL Marshall & Son

Consultants
URS Greiner Inc. (construction manager); SEA Consultants Inc. (structural); Boston Building Consultants (structural preservation), ZAR Engineering (MEP), Carol R. Johnson Associates (landscape), Building Conservation Associates, Inc. (historic materials), Hanscomb Associates, Inc.



Honor Award:
200 Newbury Street
Boston

Client:
200 Newbury Street Corporation

Architect:
CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares Inc.
Boston
www.cbtarchitects.com

Project team
Richard Bertman FAIA, Dave Dennick AIA, Wen-Chi Chiu, Jean Kramer, Peg Gengo, Heidi Welling, Steve Eschholz

Engineer:
Turner Construction Co.

Consultants
Rona Engineering (structural); Cosentini Associates (MEP); Judith Nitsch Engineering (civil); Allied Consulting (construction manager); Raymond L. Goldstein Associates (landscape); Schweppe Lighting Design, Inc. (lighting); The Halvorson Group (historic)

In the historic streetwall fronting buildings built between 1860 and 1960, there are widely varied architectural expressions across a very consistent pattern of two- and five-story low-scaled masonry townhouses. CBT faced the challenge of creating a contemporary building for retail and office uses that aligned to the historic Back Bay neighborhood.

Project description

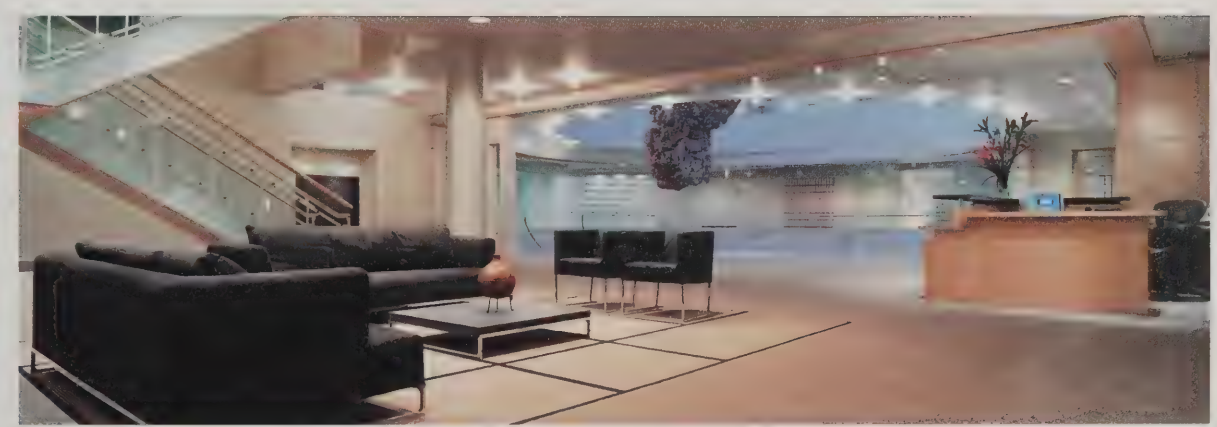




By 1995, Union Station, a landmark since 1911, had been vacant for 25 years and suffered major deterioration. For the restoration and renovation, important tasks involved replacing the towers that were removed in 1926, restoring the skylight and interior finishes, and adding a contemporary staircase in the rotunda.

Photos: Steve Rosenthal







Honor Award:
Praecis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Waltham, Massachusetts

Architect:
Jung|Brannen Associates, Inc.
Boston
www.jb2000.com

Associate Architect:
Margolis+Fishman

Contractor:
John Moriarty and Associates

Consultants:
Abbood Holloran Associates (MEP); McNamara/Salvia, Inc. (structural); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting); William R. Lewis Consultants in Analog & Digital (audio visual)

This high-growth biotechnology company outgrew its home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and relocated to a new 175,000-square-foot building in a suburban commercial office park. The [illegible] one the [illegible] ing new [illegible] prolific at Praecis [illegible] objectives [illegible]

Honor Award
Reebok World Headquarters
Canton, Massachusetts

Architect
NBBJ
Seattle, Washington
www.nbbj.com



Honor Award:
Columbus Fire Station No. 6
Columbus, Indiana

Sponsor:
Cummins Engine Foundation Architecture Program
Cummins Engine Co.
Columbus, Indiana

Architect:
William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Boston





Honor Award:
Milton Hershey School Town Center
Hershey,
Pennsylvania

Client:
Milton Hershey School

Architect:
Perry Dean Rogers| Partners Architects
Boston
www.perrydean.com



Honor Award:
West Campus
Residence Halls
Northeastern University
Boston

Architect:
William Rawn Associates,
Architects, Inc.
Boston





Honor Award:
Glavin Family Chapel
Babson College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

Architect:
William Rawn Associates,
Architects, Inc.
Boston



Consultants:
Le Messurier Consultants (structural); MP Consulting Engineers (mechanical/electrical); The BSC Group (civil); Haley & Aldrich, Inc (geotechnical); Pressley Associates, Inc. (landscape); Hanscomb (cost estimators, phase II); Daedalus Projects, Inc. (cost estimators, phase III); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting); R.E. Cameron Associates (surveyor); Sullivan Code Group (code)

Three new additions create 11,000 net sq. feet of space from the Museum of Fine Arts, strengthen the University's presence on Huntington Avenue. The buildings are the first phase of a master plan developed by Wilford, Rosen Associates, which organizes a new 12-acre section of the campus.







Honor Award:
Symphony Lake Amphitheater
Cary, North Carolina

Client:
Town of Cary

Architect:
William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Boston
www.williamrawnassociates.com

Project team:
Alex Jason AIA, William L. Rawn FAIA (principals in charge of design), John Upton, Ken Amano, Matt Cohen, David Gissen, Gary Gwon, Victor Lin, Basil Richenson, Ryan Santos

Contractor:
Sanford Contracting Company

Consultants:
Le Messurier Consultants (structural); TMP Consulting Engineers, Inc. (mechanical/plumbing); Brewster Thrush Engineering (civil); Reynolds & Jewell (landscape); Lawrence Kinkopanti & Associates (acoustical); Theatre Projects Consultants Inc. (theater); Daedalus Projects, Inc. (cost); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting); SPFS, EDIT, Inc. (specifications)

This amphitheater, a 10,000-seat outdoor performance venue, serves the North Carolina Symphony and other regional performing arts organizations. The design offers options of permanent seating and a spacious grassy lawn, providing VIP dining, concession stands, restrooms, and back of house service areas. Contemporary materials and forms while preserving a harmony with its natural surroundings.

Award
Summit Residences and Court
Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut

Architect
William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.
Boston







Honor Award

Gladys Sakowich Campus Center
Merrimack College
North Andover, Massachusetts

Architect

Sasaki Associates, Inc.
Watertown, Massachusetts
www.sasaki.com

Contractor

Consultants

Honor Award
Martha's Vineyard Airport Terminal and Site
Vineyard Haven
Massachusetts

Architect
TAMS Consultants, Inc.
Boston
www.tamsconsultants.com

Project Team
Deborah Fanizzi, AIA
Jonathan Myrbeck (project), Michael Fleming, Doug Lee, Michael Pavek, Margaret Grindl

Contractor
J.K. Scanlan Co., Inc.

Consultants
Edwards & Kelcey (planning, civil), R.B. Kimball, Inc. (MEP and fire protection), Progressive Associates (landscape), Gale Associates (specifications), Imago Design (signage)

The project totals 17,500 square feet, providing a spacious ticketing area, departure and arrivals halls, outdoor waiting areas, a restaurant, snack operation, offices, and support spaces. The signature image of the building is the wide overhang, hall, covered by a monumental wraparound wood and glass screening truss and natural wood slats roofing.





Honor Award
Weinstein Residence
New York City

Client
Michael Weinstein

Architect
Thompson and Rose Architects
[illegible]
Somerville, Massachusetts
[illegible]

[illegible]







Honor Award
Vineyard Sound Residence
Aquinnah, Massachusetts

Clients
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Quilter

Architect
Thompson and Rose Architects
[illegible]
Somerville, Massachusetts
www.charlesrosearchitects.com

Contractor
[illegible]

Consultant
[illegible]

Honor Award

Camp Paint Rock

Hyattville, Wyoming

Client:

John and Carol Mee

Architect:

Thompson and Rose Architects

Jane Thatcher Rose, Architect

Somerville, Massachusetts

www.thompsonandrose.com





Honor Award:
Polly Hill Arboretum
Visitors Center
Chilmark, Massachusetts

Architect:
Thompson and Rose
Architects
(now Charles Rose Architects)
Somerville, Massachusetts
www.charlesrosearchitects.com





Honorable Mention:
The Carroll School
Student Stand
The Carroll School
Lincoln, Massachusetts

Architect:
Keith G. Moskow
Architects, Inc.
Boston
www.moskowarchitects.com

BSA/New England Healthcare Assembly Design Awards

Jury

Karrie Fromm Hamilton AIID
The S/L/A/M Collaborative, Glastonbury, Connecticut

Scott Hannan AIA
JSA Inc., Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Gary Laney AIA
Sterling Planning Alliance/Stephen Bradley Associates, Boston

Paula Olson
Children's Hospital, Boston

Mark Warner AIA
Agnoia Design, Jupiter, Florida

Jury comments

Much of our initial discussion focused on the kinds of information we sought as we evaluated each project. For example: Does the design work efficiently? Was there an appropriate connection to the outdoors? Is access clear and easy? Is there an image of place? Is it proportional to human scale? Are the materials appropriate? Is the design functional? One juror also observed that too often when we design an element of a hospital, we tend to focus only on our own project and fail to think about the entire facility and how our projects should relate to activity elsewhere in the hospital. We also fostered some discussion on the definition of a healthcare facility. In a rapidly changing healthcare climate, should we be considering homecare or other nontraditional facilities, such home healthcare activities, as part of this program's framework?

Visit [illegible] to see a full text of jury comments, including responses to [illegible] questions, and to submit an [illegible] comment.

Honor Awards

51 Ellenzweig Associates, Inc.
Abramson Pediatric Research Center
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia

52 Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott
with Diekema/Hamann Architects
Bronson Methodist Hospital South Campus Development
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Awards

53 Rothman Partners Incorporated
Post-Partum Suite for Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Boston

54 Tsoi/Kobus & Associates, Inc.
Jaindl Family Pavilion, Lehigh Valley Hospital
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Citations

54 Guenther Petrarca LLP
(now Guenther 5 Architects, PLLC; and Studio Petrarca)
Beth Israel Continuum Center for Health & Healing
New York City

55 Prellwitz/Chilinski Associates
The Café at Children's, The Children's Hospital
Boston



Honor Award:
Abramson Pediatric Research Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Architect:
Ellenzweig Associates, Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.ellenzweig.com

Project Team:
Barry Ellenzweig, Principal-in-charge of design; Janet Rice, AIA, Project Manager; Steve Silverstein and Nina Colwell, AIA, Project Architects; Jeffrey Wyatt, Project Manager; Mary Jane Wilkins; James McCann; Matt Aaron; Michael Peter; Maria Trevino; Randy Vennes; Jean Woolsey; Dave Way; Sharon Kaufmann; Ellen Light; Jeff Scalco; Bryce Bonnette

Contractor:
L.F. Driscoll Co.

Consultants:
Le Messurier Consultants (structural); BR+A Consulting Engineers (mechanical, electrical); Kim Lee Architects & Daniel Urban (landscape)

The Abramson Pediatric Research Center is one of the largest pediatric research centers in the country with 65 research laboratories dedicated to a single disease or body system. In addition to laboratories and their support spaces, the center contains classrooms offering a wide range of pediatric courses, a conference center, several research facilities and an underground parking garage.

Photo: Jeff Goldberg/Esto

Honor Award
Bronson Methodist Hospital
South Campus Development
Bronson Methodist Hospital
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Architect
Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott
Boston
www.sbra.com

Associate Architect
Diekema/Hamann Architects
Kalamazoo, Michigan







Design Award:
Post-Partum Suite for Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Boston

Architect:
Rothman Partners Incorporated
Boston
www.rothmanpartners.com

Project team:
Martha L. Rothman AIA

Consultants:
Jim Ruell
R.W. Sullivan
Vermeulens Inc: (cost)

nurseries and a solarium with toys for older children.

Photos: Steve Rosenthal

Client:
Beth Israel
Continuum Center for Health & Healing
New York City

Architect:
Guenther Petrarca LLP
[now Guenther & Architecture, PLLC, and Studio Petrarca]
New York City
www.gparch.com
www.studiopetrarca.com



Design Team:
Jaindl Family Pavilion
Lehigh Valley Hospital
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Architect:
Tsoi/Kobus & Associates, Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
[now Tsoi/Kobus & Associates]

Consultants:
Structural Engineer:
Weidlinger Associates, Inc.
Mechanical/Electrical Engineer:
Cosentini Associates
Civil Engineer:
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
Landscape Architect:
Carol R. Johnson & Associates
Lighting Consultant:
Fisher Marantz Stone
Code Consultant:
Rolf Jensen & Associates, Inc.
Construction Manager:
Turner Construction Company



The renovation transforms a hospital wall that had all the charm of a prison wall into an inviting entrance. The project establishes a new image for the hospital in the community, and, by providing a welcoming environment, also reduces a visitor's anxiety about entering a hospital. Construction began in 2000 and is scheduled for completion in 2002.





Citation:
The Café at Children's
The Children's Hospital
Boston

Architects
Prellwitz/Chilinski Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.prellwitzchilinski.com

Contractor:
George B.H. Macomber Company

Consultants:
Sodexho Marriott (food service operator); Bard, Rao + Athanas (mechanical and electrical); Robert W. Sullivan, Inc. (plumbing and fire protection); Zaldastani Associates, Inc. (structural); Clevenger Frable LaVallee, Inc. (food service consulting); Cambridge Seven Associates (graphics)

BSA/AIA New York Urban Design Awards

Jury:

Claire Barrett AICP
Claire Barrett & Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mark Ginsberg AIA
Curtis + Ginsberg Architects, New York City

Hunter Morrison
Cleveland City Planning Commission

Brian Shea AIA
Cooper Robertson & Partners, New York City

Robert Stern AIA
Carlson Associates, Framingham, Massachusetts

Jury comment:

... Several of the submissions provoked discussion ... on the state of urban design as a discipline, the traditional confusion between urban design and planning, and the impact of contemporary architectural education and the computer revolution ... of the underexposed and use of fundamental urban design tools. ... Often, for example, we found instances of good urban design analysis or good intuitive design, but rarely did we find both evident or at least clearly linked in the same portfolio. ... While [urging] clever ... to use ... some of the fundamental tools of urban design, we also urge designers to remember that urban design is not about maps, it is about identification of issues and meanings. What is the larger picture? Why is the place under study different from other places? Has the problem been sufficiently defined before any solution is proposed?

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including comments on completed projects, may be found at www.architecture.org/awards.htm

Willo von Moltke Honor Award for Urban Design Excellence

57 Antonio Di Mambro + Associates, Inc.
Caguas 2020 Urban Zone Study, Caguas, Puerto Rico

Urban Design Award

58 Goody, Clancy & Associates
A Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights in Boston

59 Goody, Clancy & Associates
A New Riverview:
A Community Plan for Riverview Estates HOPE VI
Cleveland, Ohio

Special Citations

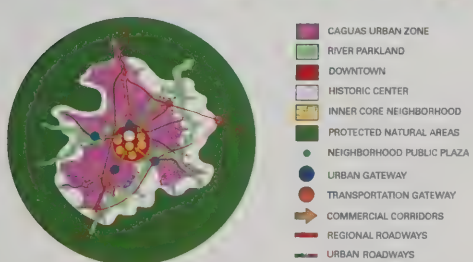
60 Paul Lukez Architecture
North End Traces, Boston

61 Jambhekar Strauss PC
(now merged with Fox & Fowle Architects, PC)
Midtown East Queens Master Plan

Caguas 2020 Urban Zone Study

Antonio Di Mambro + Associates, Inc.





A Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights in Boston

Goody, Clancy & Associates



Urban Design Award

A New Riverview:
A Community Plan for
Riverview Estates
HOPE VI

Cleveland, Ohio

Client
Cuyahoga Metropolitan
Housing Authority

Architect
Goody, Clancy & Associates
Boston
www.goodyclancy.com





Urban Design Award

North End Traces

Boston

Client

2000/2001 North End Community Survey

Architect

Paul Lukez Architecture

Cambridge, Massachusetts

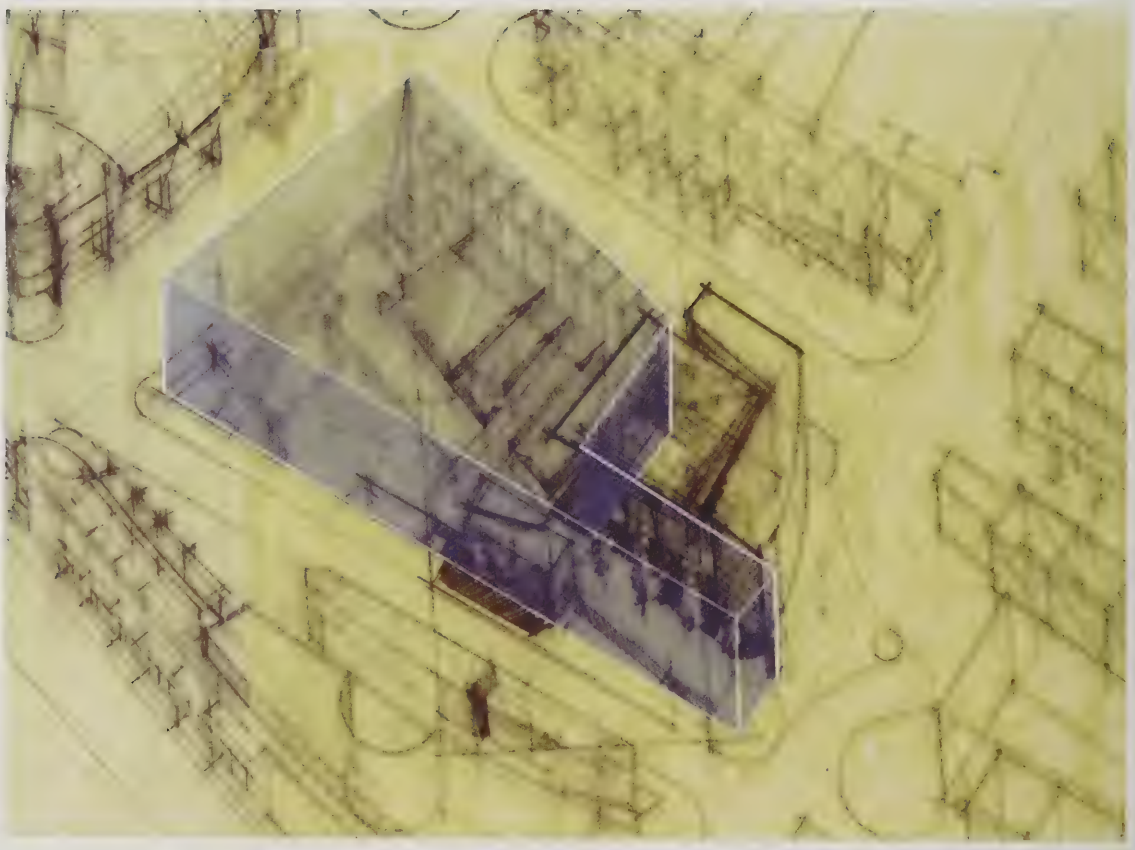
www.plukez.com

Project Team

Paul Lukez and Associates

Jeffrey Turnbull

The North End Traces project was conceived with a strategy that would engage the community in the process of documenting its own history. Through a series of workshops, participants were asked to identify and map the physical traces of the neighborhood's past. Their findings were then translated into a set of interventions that would mark the traces in the public realm.



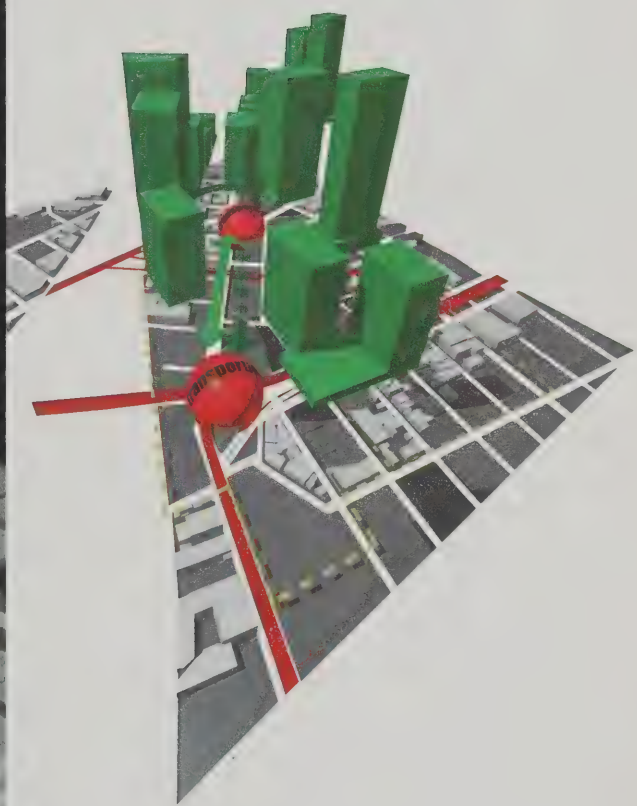
Urban Design Award
Special Citation
Midtown East Queens Master Plan
Queens, New York

Client:
Urban Expansion

Architect:
Jambhekar Strauss PC
with Hagerman Architects, PLLC
Tod A. Fowle Architects, PLLC
New York City
www.foxfowle.com

Commissioned by a group with half a million property of Queens Plaza to transform the southern part of Midtown Manhattan, the goal was to create a vibrant, urban environment. The plan for Midtown East by adopting an approach to zoning that encouraged mixed-use development with lower overall bulk





BSA/AIA New York Sustainable Design Awards

63 Pei Cobb Freed & Partners Architects LLP
with Architekten Cie
ABN-AMRO Bank World Headquarters
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

64 Van der Ryn Architects
Real Goods Solar Living Center
Hopland, California

Citation for Sustainable Planning

65 Sasaki Associates, Inc.
Pearl River Concept and Urban Design
Guangzhou, China

Sustainable Design Award:
ABN-AMRO Bank
World Headquarters
Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Architect:
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners
Architects LLP
New York City
www.pcf-p.com

Associate Architect:
Architekten Cie
Amsterdam
The Netherlands









Sustainable Design Award

Real Goods
Solar Living Center
Hopland, California

Client
Real Goods Trading
Corporation

Architect
Van der Ryn Architects
San Anselmo, California
www.vanderryn.com

Designer
Gaia Construction Co., Inc.
Hopland

Landscape Design Consultant
Berkeley



Similan for sustainable planning

Pearl River Concept and Urban Design

Guangzhou, China

Client:
Urban Planning Bureau

Architect:
Sasaki Associates, Inc.
Watertown, Massachusetts
www.sasaki.com

Project team:
Laurel McIntyre, Team Project Manager
Matthew Dvorak, Team Co-Project Manager
Park Phan, Reuben Xu, Le Jiang, Chan Jin Kang, Ke Sun, Yiwei Zhang, JAY Wang

For City of Guangzhou and allow a series of six new, vastly interesting areas on the river. The master plan for the Guangzhou Pearl River Delta portion of Guangdong province is being developed to [illegible] and a series of [illegible] to accommodate future [illegible] limited parking that will [illegible] and [illegible]





BSA Unbuilt Architecture Awards

67 Luoni Gold Design Studio
with Karl Thorne Architects, Inc.
The Conservancy: A Conservation Community
Steinhatchee, Florida

68 PLY Architecture + Design
Sacred Ground (Prototype Church)

Citation for Excellence

68 Fox & Fowle Architects
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
Canopy Design
Washington, DC

69 Friedrich St. Florian, Architect
National Opera
Oslo, Norway

69 Vincent Snyder, Architect
Voboril Residence
Wahoo, Nebraska

Unbuilt Architecture Award:
The Conservancy:
A Conservation Community
Steinhatchee, Florida

Designer:
Luoni Gold Design Studio
Gainesville, Florida

Executive Architect:
Karl Thorne Architects, Inc.

Project team:
Martin Gold, Stephen Luoni (principals); Scott Crawford, Anthony Nolan; Harry Semeoles; Tzveta Panayatova; Albert Dambros; Lamas Orlando; Ryan Marzo, Jeremy Franklin, Amos Miers

Consultants:
Water and Air Research (environmental); Bodo and Associates Inc (structural)

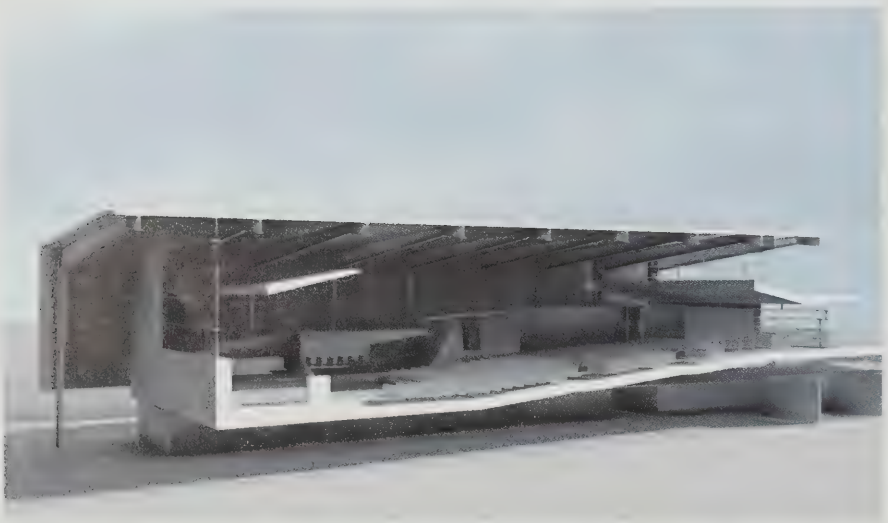
This 56-unit development is a model of "smart-growth" for rural residential development, through the integration of natural systems with social systems. Infrastructure is powered by alternative energy sources as units are outfitted with solar collection cells, HVAC earth heat sinks, and ties into an organic waste treatment system.





Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Canopy Design

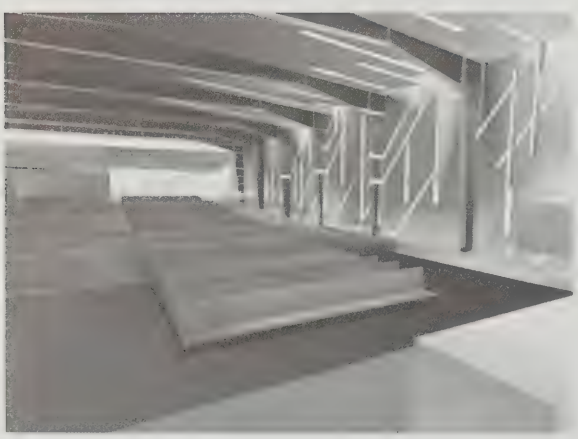
Designer:
Fox & Fowle Architects





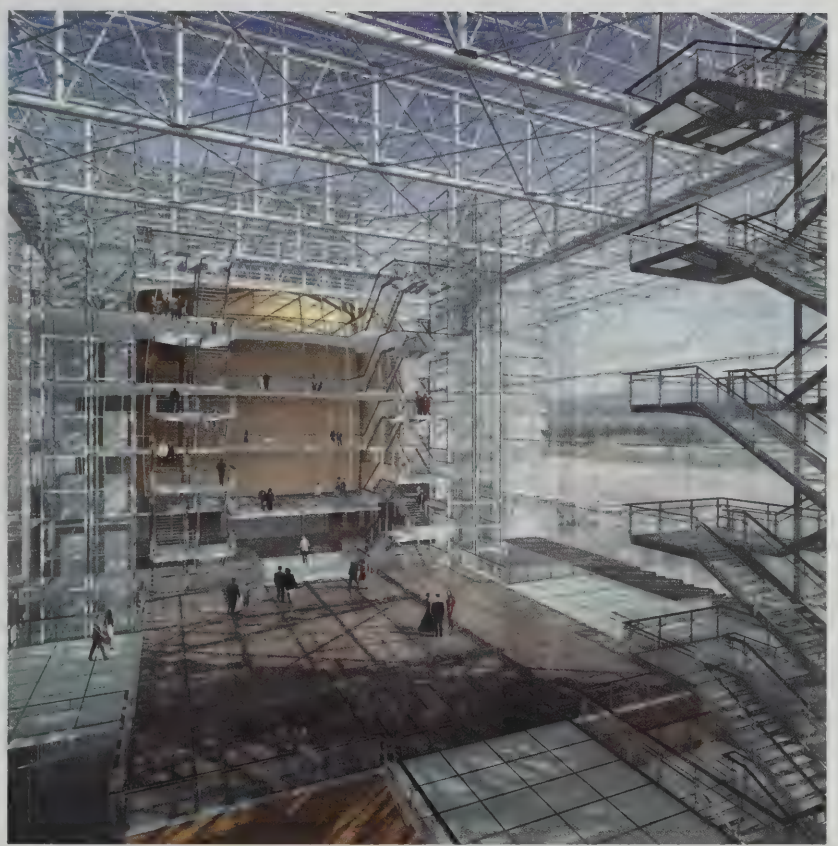
Unbuilt Architecture Award
Sacred Ground (Prototype Church)

Designer:
PLY Architecture + Design



National Opera

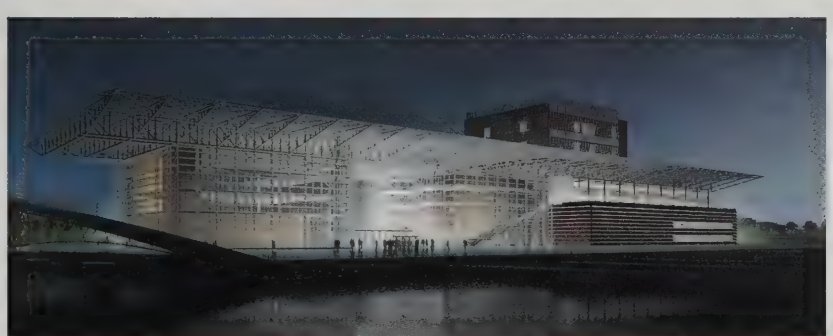
Friedrich St. Florian, Architect





Voboril Residence

Vincent Snyder, Architect



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architecture
interior_design
urban_design

Leslie Morison
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morison@cbtarchitects.com

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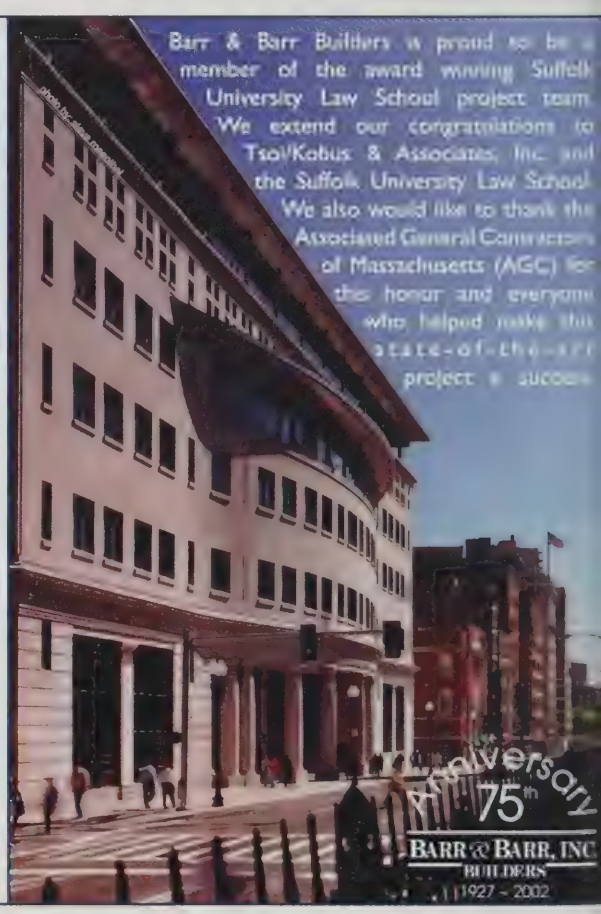
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Boston Society of Architects Design Awards Programs 2002

Calls for Entries are available on the dates noted from the Boston Society of Architects Web site (www.architects.org) or by e-mail at bsa@architects.org or call 617-951-1433x221.

Jury comments and examples of design award recipients' work from previous programs are also available online at www.architects.org.

	Eligibility	Call for entries available	Submission deadline
Educational Facilities Design Awards	Public and private K-12 educational facilities of any type anywhere in the world by New England architects; also any architect anywhere in the world may submit project(s) built in New England	January 2002	March 4 2002
Healthcare Facilities Design Awards Co-sponsored by the New England Healthcare Assembly	Healthcare facilities of any type anywhere in the world by any New England architect; also any architect anywhere in the world may submit any project built in New England	January 2002	March 18 2002
Housing Design Awards Co-sponsored by AIA New York	All housing types (single-family, multi-family, assisted-living, dorms, etc.) anywhere in the world by New England or New York architects; also any architect anywhere in the world may submit project(s) built in New England or New York	January 2002	April 1 2002
Interior Architecture/ Interior Design Awards Co-sponsored by IIDA and ASID	All types of interiors projects anywhere in the world by New England architects and interior designers; also architects and interior designers anywhere in the world may submit projects built in New England.	January 2002	April 17 2002
Unbuilt Architecture	Any architect, architectural educator, or architecture student anywhere in the world may submit "real," academic, and/or theoretical projects	March 2002	July 15 2002
AIA New England Design Awards	Any project of any type anywhere in the world by any New England architect; also any architect anywhere in the world may submit any project built in New England	April 2002	July 29 2002
Honor Awards	Any project of any type anywhere in the world by any Massachusetts architect; also any architect anywhere in the world may submit any project built in Massachusetts	April 2002	August 19 2002

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Special



Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Rendering courtesy Goody, Clancy & Associates

University of Pennsylvania
Modular VII Chiller Plant

top:
Hyde Park Branch Library

bottom:
A Civic Vision for Turnpike
Air Rights in Boston

347 .3

Awards

Every year, Boston-area architects are honored by their colleagues around the country for contributions to design, to our profession, and to the communities we serve. During 2001, such national recognition was conferred on these colleagues:

AIA Honor Award for Architecture
Hyde Park Branch Library
Schwartz/Silver Architects, Boston

AIA Honor Award for Architecture
University of Pennsylvania
Modular VII Chiller Plant
Leers Weinzapfel Associates, Boston

AIA Honor Award for Regional and Urban Design
A Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights in Boston
Goody, Clancy & Associates, Boston

AIA/*Business Week-Architectural Record* Award
University of Pennsylvania Module VII Chiller Plant
Leers Weinzapfel Associates, Boston

AIA/ALA Library Buildings Award
University of New Hampshire Dimond Library
Graham Gund Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Institute Honors for Collaborative Achievement
John R. Stilgoe
Harvard University

Young Architects Award
George A. Takoudes AIA

Honorary Member
Leo L. Beranek, PhD, Hon. AIA

Elevated to AIA College of Fellows:
Frederick Noyes FAIA
Evan Shu FAIA



Each year, the BSA also identifies architects, allies, and institutions deserving special recognition for their contributions to the Massachusetts architectural community and to the enrichment of our built and natural environments. In 2001, the BSA conferred these honors:

Award of Honor
Kenneth DeMay FAIA (photo above)

Commonwealth Award
Women's Institute for
Housing and Economic Development
Boston

Honorary Membership in the Boston Society of Architects
Robert Weinberg, Hon. BSA

25 Years Ago...
The 1976 Harleston Parker Medal

Science Center, Harvard University
Sert Jackson and Associates, Inc.

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Twenty-five years ago, the Parker Medal jury chose to honor the Harvard Science Center, commenting: "The Committee felt that the architect has been able to create a successful solution to a complex problem without hoopla or fanfare while simultaneously creating public spaces which have the richness and vitality necessary for prolonged enjoyment.

"The Committee felt the developing of the public space at the public level as a concourse was extremely successful, especially in the context of academic buildings."

We can only wish that other awards juries could state their values so succinctly. Here's to prolonged enjoyment without hoopla!

The winner of the 2001 Harleston Parker Medal is the restoration and renovation of the Boston Public Library McKim Building, by Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott. *See page 30.*



1976 Harleston Parker Jury:
Richard J. Bertman FAIA, chair
Howard F. Elkus RIBA, FAIA
Ronald Gourley FAIA
Donlyn Lyndon FAIA
Joseph Maybank FAIA
Henry A. Wood FAIA

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